



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

OFFICE FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Talking Points for Priests

Explaining why Confirmation and First Communion are at the Cathedral

Opening: Acknowledge Parents & Set the Tone

- First, I want to thank you. Your commitment to bringing your children to this moment matters deeply to the Church.

The Big Picture: Why the Cathedral?

- These sacraments are not just parish moments – they’re universal Church moments. Celebrating them at the Cathedral connects your child to the wider Catholic Church throughout the world.
- The Cathedral is our Mother Church. Just as families have a home, the diocese does too – and this is where the bishop’s ministry is rooted and connects us to the Catholic world.
- By coming to the Cathedral, your child is experiencing that they belong to something bigger than one parish. They belong to the Catholic Church – the only Church founded by Jesus Christ Himself and enduring from the time of his ministry in the world until today.
- Confirmation is a sacrament that unites us directly with the bishop, the successor of the Apostles.

A Pilgrimage, Not Just an Event

- This is a pilgrimage, not just another ceremony at our local church.
- Making a journey, stepping into the Cathedral, and worshipping there helps mark this as a once-in-a-lifetime moment.
- Years from now, your child may forget a lot, but they’ll remember walking into the Cathedral and realizing, ‘This was important.’

What This Does Not Take Away/Parish celebration

- This does not take your child away from the parish. Your family is still their spiritual home, and your parish remains their local Catholic home.



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- This is not replacing parish life; it's strengthening it by connecting us more visibly to the universal Church.
- Understanding this, we will be having a separate celebration at our church on _____ date.
- This will bring the graces of the Cathedral experience back to our pews and allow for our entire parish family to celebrate our children with a special Mass and reception.

Addressing Practical Concerns Gently

- We recognize that travel and scheduling require extra planning, and we're grateful for your flexibility.
- For families who cannot attend, the diocese offers live-streaming so loved ones can still be part of the moment.

Reframing the Experience for Parents

- This is a chance for all of us, too – to step into the Cathedral, to pray there, and to renew your own faith alongside your child.
- Your presence and positivity toward this day tells your child that what God is doing in their life matters and this is a big deal and incredible spiritual opportunity.

Use a Story

- Imagine your child is on a sports team, and their team advances to the championship game, which takes place 2-3 hours away.
- How would you react?
- You likely would be thrilled and celebrate! They made it to the big game!
- You would book a hotel room, pack up your car, maybe even take a vacation day or two, deal with the traffic and travel headaches, and stand there excited and proud as your child plays in the championship game and in the big-time venue.
- Your child receiving the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion is that spiritual championship game for him or her.



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- The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield is that big-time stadium.
- Traveling to the Mother Church of our diocese for your child to be sealed with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation and receive Jesus wholly and entirely present in the Eucharist for the first time, is really one of the most important days for their relationship with God.
- The Cathedral, as the Mother Church of our diocese, is a local symbol of our universal faith. So, it is perfectly fitting for the occasion and will help provide a powerful and spiritually uplifting experience for everyone.

Things Not to Say

- **Don't say this is "about the bishop's schedule"**
Avoid framing it as a logistical or time-management issue. Parents should hear mission and meaning, not calendars.
- **Don't say or imply this was the bishop's decision alone**
Avoid language that suggests top-down imposition. This was shaped by priests and lay leaders across the diocese and then implemented by Bishop Paprocki.
- **Don't use negative, resigned, or frustrated language**
Avoid phrases like "we have to," "we were told," "there's nothing we can do," or "this is just how it is now," or "let's just make the best of it."
- **Don't show negative body language**
No sighing, eyerolling, crossed arms, sarcasm, or joking at the diocese's expense. Parents read tone faster than words.
- **Don't compare it unfavorably to "how we used to do it"**
Avoid statements like "this isn't ideal," "it's not what we'd prefer," or "we know it's harder than before." That invites resistance.



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- **Don't lead with inconvenience**
Don't start by talking about travel, parking, seating limits, or schedules. Lead with purpose; logistics come later.
- **Don't argue with parents or correct them defensively**
Avoid debating/dismissing concerns. Acknowledge concerns calmly and redirect to the bigger picture.
- **Don't suggest parish life is diminished**
Avoid anything that sounds like "this takes something away from the parish."
The message should always be both/and, not either/or.
- **Don't over-explain policy details in emotional moments**
When parents are anxious or upset, avoid long procedural explanations. Stay pastoral, simple, and focused on the child's faith.