PARISH LETTER TO PARENTS

(date)

Dear Parent,

In January 2016, with the approval of Bishop Larry Silva, the Diocese of Honolulu officially began the process of restoring the Sacraments of Initiation to their original order: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

So it is with great joy that we announce that our parish will begin the process of preparing your baptized child to be confirmed and receive first Holy Communion on the Solemnity of Pentecost (date).

You are essential to this process and we will assist you with guiding your child on this journey. Through attending Mass each Sunday and your active engagement of prayer, study, and reflection experiences that we will provide, you will discover that your entire family will grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus and grow closer to one another.

Period of remote preparation: This is a time of instruction which typically takes place in the year prior to receiving the sacraments. Assist your child by reinforcing what is being taught in religious education classes and establishing a consistent pattern of prayer, worship and regular conversation in the context of family life of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. We will guide you along the way!

Period of immediate preparation: Assist your child with preparing to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and Eucharist (or Confirmation only) by continued active participation in the religious education program, parish life – including special sessions and a retreat focused on the sacraments – praying together as a family, and connecting the love you have for your child to God’s extravagant love for us. Again, we will provide you with the guidance you need to make this year a meaningful experience.

Ongoing formation: Once your child has been fully initiated into the church having been baptized, confirmed, and having received first Holy Communion, help your child grow in faith by continued, active participation in parish life, community service, and enrolling your child annually in the parish religious education and youth ministry programs. Your child deserves the best and a loving family life that nurtures Christian faith and discipleship is the best gift a parent can give!

(closing remarks and signature)

PARENT LETTER TO CHILD

[Date]

Dear [child’s name],

As we celebrate with you your Confirmation and first Holy Communion in the Catholic faith, we remember so well your Baptism. How excited we were to plan and prepare for that great event! You were so small, yet so alive!

Our parish team told us that your Baptism was your first step in becoming initiated into the Church. We really felt the support of our whole parish when you were baptized. In much the same way, perhaps, you are feeling that support now as you are about to be confirmed and receive first Holy Communion.

Now we share in your joy in being confirmed and receiving first Holy Communion, completing your Sacraments of Christian Initiation. You will be strengthened now in Confirmation in a dynamic new way and share in the holy meal that our parish shares Sunday after Sunday. Jesus Christ will be with you in a new way, nourishing us as a family to live as His disciples.

We will be with you to help you live as a member of Christ’s Body, the Church. And we will continue to pray for you and love you all the days of our lives.

Love,

**Why is our parish celebrating Confirmation and First Communion at the same event?**

In the early Church Christian initiation was celebrated together as a single event. The person was immersed into the waters of Baptism, anointed with chrism, and shared in the eucharistic meal. Over time, and for many reasons, the celebration of these sacramental rituals became separated from one another. In the renewal of the sacraments that was mandated by the Second Vatican Council, the Church was invited to restore the celebrations of the sacraments of Christian initiation to their original order— Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. This restored order helps us recognize that sharing in the Eucharist completes our initiation into the Church.

**What does the Church say about linking these two sacraments?**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church articulates the inseparable nature of the Sacraments of Initiation as follows:“Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ’s Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ” (CCC 1275).

**Doesn’t the Church require a certain age for Confirmation?**

Both the Rite of Confirmation (11) and the Code of Canon Law (Canon 891) set the age of discretion (age seven) as the age for Confirmation. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has named a broad range of ages—between the ages of eight and eighteen. Within that range, local bishops may determine their own diocesan policy. Thus, the age for Confirmation may vary from diocese to diocese, sometimes even from parish to parish. Regardless of age, Confirmation is always a Sacrament of Initiation. The important thing to remember is that sacraments are not about age alone; they are about growing in faith, about sharing in God’s grace.

**How will my child be preparing for Confirmation?**

In the restored order Confirmation preparation is integrated into the preparation for first Holy Communion. The close connection between Baptism and Confirmation is emphasized and the importance of Eucharist as the culmination of Christian initiation is recognized.

**Will my child be learning about the Holy Spirit?**

Naturally, as your child continues to participate in religious education, he or she will continue to learn more and more about the Holy Spirit’s action in our lives. Just as your child was first empowered by the Holy Spirit in Baptism, your child will continue to grow in the Holy Spirit through the grace of Confirmation.

**How will I know if my child is ready for Confirmation?**

Readiness for Confirmation cannot be separated from readiness for Eucharist, and sacrament readiness is never just about learning; but, more significantly, it is about faith. As your child prepares for Confirmation and first Holy Communion, here are three things to keep in mind:

● Sacraments are always a beginning. As your child matures in faith, he or she will grow in his or her understanding of Confirmation and experience of the Eucharist.

● The Eucharist is the culmination of the three Sacraments of Initiation. Your child is now welcomed as a fully participating member of the Church.

● At any age, completion of the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—in no way signals graduation. Rather it is the beginning of a lifetime of being nourished at the table of the Lord.