



April 13, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to these webpages designed to help you become familiar not only with the changes that are coming to faith formation for students in grades 6 through 12 — including the move of Confirmation from grade 11 to grade 9 — but also to help you understand the reasoning behind these changes.

To that end, I encourage you to read the [article](#) published in the *Diocese of Erie News* on April 13, 2022. It will give you a comprehensive overview of what we expect to accomplish and why.

I want you to know of my enthusiastic support for this initiative. It is no secret that as many as 67 percent of young people around the country are leaving the Catholic Church by the age of 17. A great deal of research and understanding about sharing faith has occurred since our last significant update to the religious formation of young people back in 1983.

Our new approach moves from a classroom model to a discipleship model. Using a number of well-tested approaches, such as the *Edge* program for grades 6 through 8, the emphasis is on guiding each young person into a personal relationship with Christ. Scripture and catechesis remain essential components. But small group discussions, service opportunities and worship experiences are more fully integrated. We know that strengthening a personal relationship with Christ leads to growth in the desire to learn more and embrace the fullness of the Catholic faith.

I am pleased to say the new approach has been successful in the handful of parishes where it has been introduced as a pilot program. Interestingly, the adults who are involved are finding their own faith is being renewed as well.

There is no doubt the Diocese of Erie is in the midst of a challenging moment in history. This is true for many dioceses in the northeast and mid-Atlantic portions of the country. We have needed to step back, to reassess, to restructure and to rethink. But I have seen your generosity and resilience. I know you love Christ and the Catholic

Church. And I am sincerely filled with hope that the substantial work that has gone into this new initiative will bear fruit.

Please take the time to become informed about this initiative, please keep it and our young people in your prayers, and please be ready to volunteer when invited!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie