



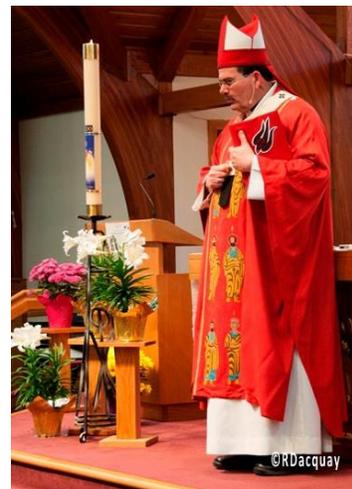
## **Confirmation... in the Middle of a Pandemic!**

*By Daniel Bahuaud*

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***This spring, a hundred young people from seven Catholic parishes were confirmed in the Christian life by Bishop Albert LeGatt. Normally, for this important sacrament and rite of passage, young confirmands are accompanied by their parents, godparents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and other family members, as well as many friends and parishioners. However, because of COVID-19, it was necessary to rethink things – the training, the visits to the Archbishop’s residence, and even the Confirmation Masses!***

Organizer of confirmations at Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Lorraine Le Moullec, is proud of the way parents took charge of their children's training. "On May 1st, when our nine young parishioners were confirmed, they were ready. I mean really and truly ready. The parents used the material organized by Diane Bélanger, the diocesan catechetics coordinator, Francophone sector. Parents could download material from the diocesan website."



Carmel Demers, a Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes parent, states that the training process was "a real pleasure". "I was able to sit down with Joel, my son, to study the material, answer his questions, and talk about our faith as a family. It was an opportunity for real sharing, between him and me, but also with his godfather and

godmother, who are in Winnipeg. We chat online, and we prayed together. They were able to share with him their memories of their Confirmation.”

His son, Joel Plourde, appreciated the new approach. "I enjoyed doing this with Mom. I learned a lot, maybe more than in class. But at home, there were also loads of distractions! Still, I feel happy about it, and proud to be confirmed. At the ceremony, we were only a small group, barely fifty. Mom played the piano and my sister the guitar. And because of COVID, Bishop LeGatt used wadding, dipped in the anointing oil, to mark our foreheads with a sign of the cross. It was unusual, and something I'll remember well into the future.”



Usually, the confirmands of each parish visit the Archbishop's residence and St. Boniface Cathedral to learn more about the role of an archbishop, and the history of the diocese. Not possible in 2021.

Denis Beaudette, of Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens Parish, shot a French language video in which Bishop LeGatt was able to share the most important teachings. He explains: "The coordinator of the catechesis at Saints-Martyrs-Canadiens, Amber Wsiaki, prepared a small script, which even had questions that our confirmands wanted to ask of His Grace. Diane Bélanger also prepared explanatory texts. Bishop Albert was very pleased to participate. The video will serve as a beautiful souvenir for the confirmands, but even now it's obvious that we could also re-use it in years to come to help other confirmands.”



To see the video (in French), [click here!](#)

At St. Timothy's Parish in St. Vital, 50 young people were confirmed. Michelle Coyne, the parish sacramental preparation coordinator, explains: "Last fall, we got permission to confirm the 2020 group, but the second lockdown ruined everything."

"In the meantime, the 2021 group was getting also getting ready. To help everyone, I created a website where, each week, students could review material with their parents. There were 22 lessons, so they were well prepared."

Two celebrations had been planned at St. Timothy's, but every week it seems, provincial restrictions were increasingly limiting the number of people. Given the reduced capacity, a third, and a fourth celebration were added.

Lilian Klassen, parent: "We had to adapt to the changing situation all the time. My son Jacob was from the 2020 group, and his little brother Timothy from the 2021 cohort. Last year, Jacob prepared for the sacrament in a classroom setting, at church. With Timothy, we did everything at home, as a family, using the texts, games and videos on the website. Given the approach, all of us were able to go deeper into the material and our reflections.

Denise Flint agrees: "For me, it was like adult faith formation, as I brought all my life experience to the material. It became so rich. My daughter Holly and I have forged an even closer bond than the one we already have."

Holly Flint sees one particular advantage to the online approach: "I enjoyed learning my lessons during the day, instead of at night, as is usually done in church for catechesis. I wasn't tired!"

To replace the visit to the Archbishop's residence, Koreen Hrizai, the diocesan Catechetics Coordinator, Anglophone sector, and Yssa Licsi, the diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinator, organized a Zoom meeting with Bishop LeGatt.

Jacob Klassen: "It was a beautiful chat. Bishop Albert asked me if my interactions with Timothy were positive. My little brother said, 'Not always.' We all laughed."



Denise Flint: "At the celebration itself, the reduced capacity allowed us to appreciate the significance of the sacrament." Bishop LeGatt agrees: "The intimacy the reduced capacity afforded made it possible for me to really talk with the confirmands. It was more personal experience for them, and their families."

In the future, Michelle Coyne plans to integrate all the new tools to the formation of future confirmands: "The resources ensure a continuity

and connection that we didn't have before, not to mention greater participation and better learning and progression. For me, the Internet is a game changer.”

Bishop LeGatt agrees: "I plan to use Zoom to ensure a dialogue with young people, whether kids, teens or young adults, to answer their questions during sacramental prep but also anytime, about any aspects of life in the Church. Zoom could also help a parish priest to better integrate young people into the life of his parish.”

