



# CATHOLIC COURIER

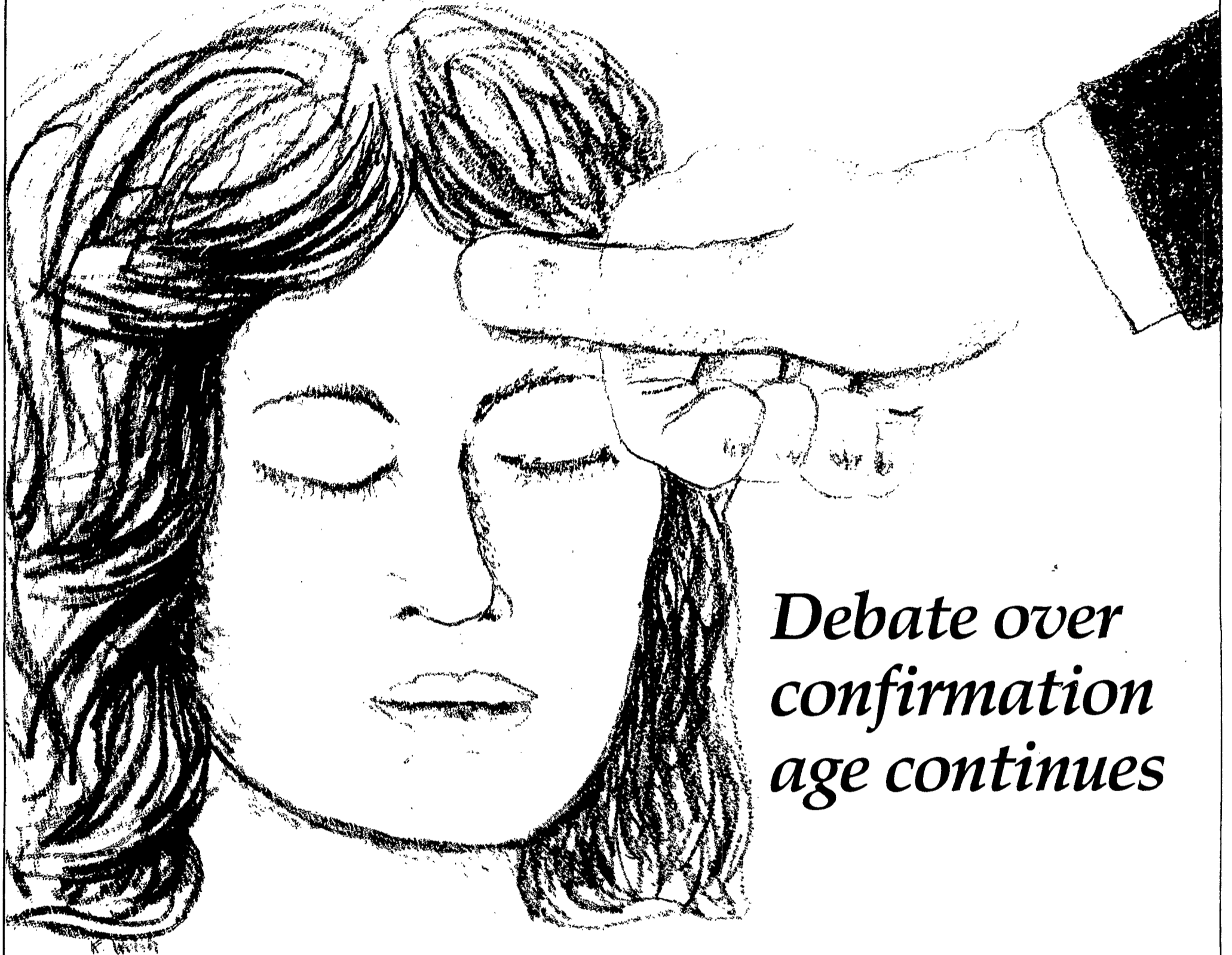
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## *Debate over confirmation age continues*

**By Mike Latona**  
Staff writer

**W**hat is the proper age at which to administer the sacrament of confirmation?

Ask that question of 10 people, and you may get 10 different answers.

In most cases, U.S. dioceses today confirm children between the ages of 12 and 18.

In the Diocese of Rochester most candidates for confirmation are in the ninth and 10th grades, according to retired Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, who shares confirmation duties with Bishops Matthew H. Clark and Joseph L. Hogan.

But Bishop Hogan, who led the diocese until Bishop Clark's 1979 installation, preferred a slightly younger age.

"It is my decision that confirmation will be administered in the Diocese of Rochester to those of junior high school level (grades 7 and 8)," Bishop Hogan wrote in the 1970 document "Confirmation Catechism: Commission to Mission."

And early in this century, it was common for members of this diocese to be confirmed by the age of 10.

Despite the variation in age, all of these practices are consistent with the decree Pope Pius X set forth in 1903, ordering that first Holy Communion be administered before confirmation instead of thereafter.

For the first dozen centuries of its history, the church administered confirmation at, or near, the time of baptism. A 12th-century shift moved the age of confirmation to 7, which was known as the "age of reason" or "age of discretion."

Nevertheless, the practice of administering the sacraments of initiation in the order baptism, confirmation and Holy Eucharist continued until Pope Pius X's reign.

Although Pius X's decree reordering the sacraments removed adolescent confirmation as an obstacle to early Eucharist, many today argue that the original order should be restored. Part of the impetus for such a move is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the process by which adults now are received into the Catholic Church.

The RCIA, first implemented by the church in the 1970s

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