

ION: Ready or not?

Photograph by Matthew Scott

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Mary Jo Capuano, 10, was the youngest of the confirmands at the St. John the Evangelist, Rochester confirmation April 6.

in practice, they're necessarily applicable," Engstrom commented. He coordinates the confirmation class at Our Lady of Lourdes, which is open to parishioners of junior-high school age and older.

Matt Giuliano, an Our Lady of Lourdes parishioner, expressed surprise when he learned that children are eligible for confirmation at age 7 in the diocese.

"I'd just assumed that you did it at high-school age. It makes sense to me" to keep it at the later age, said Matt, 16, who was confirmed last June.

Matt said he felt that children of younger ages "don't really know what's going on" in regard to the meaning of confirmation.

"You need more maturity to know what it's all about," Matt added. "I just felt like I really knew what I was doing."

However, Joy countered, the fourth-graders in her confirmation preparation classes seemed to have a good handle on the subject matter.

"I didn't even notice them, so they must have been paying attention and being mature," she remarked. "Fourth-graders may not always know what they're doing, but they know more than people give them credit for."

At the same time, Joy agreed with Matt's point that anyone wishing to be confirmed should take his or her decision seriously.

"You need to really understand

what you're doing. There are a lot of people who say they love something, and a month later they say they hate it," she said.

Matt said that no matter what the age, the decision to receive this sacrament — as opposed to baptism or first Eucharist — should be left up to the individual.

"It's more for yourself. When you're younger, you're more under your parents' wing. But I really don't think your parents should make you (receive confirmation)," Matt remarked.

Some examples of individual readiness are offered by Anthony Loperfido, 14. He is due to be confirmed this coming January at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Auburn.

"I think I'm ready. I pray just about every night before bed," Anthony said. He added that he's also increased his involvement in parish activities, even though he has had to sacrifice other social opportunities.

Although Anthony's confirmation class comprises ninth- and 10th-graders, he said he wouldn't be opposed to seeing younger people receive the sacrament.

"If you're trying to make a change and attend church as much as you can, and you think you're ready to be confirmed, then you should tell the church," Anthony said. "If you think in your own eyes that you're ready, then you should be allowed."

Above all, Carroll emphasized, confirmation should be viewed as a sacrament that holds lifelong spiritual meaning.

"Too often, it's been considered 'graduation,'" Carroll said. "If you felt you had 'graduated,' you wouldn't feel like you have to come to church anymore or go to religious education. We have a responsibility to continue our religious formation all through our lives."

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