



## Cardinal Egan confirms 6 inmates at Staten Island's state prison

By Lisa Ann Williamson

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Jan Somma-Hammel/Staten Island Advance

Cardinal Egan celebrates mass of confirmation in the chapel at Arthur Kill Correctional Facility.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- John McIntyre put on a fresh, white, button-down shirt and went to chapel.

Yesterday was a special day. McIntyre, 22, was being confirmed in the Roman Catholic faith. With five others, he'd stand before his peers, his priest, the community and God and be enriched by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Adding to the significance of the occasion, Cardinal Edward Egan was presiding at the ceremony at the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel of the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility in Charleston. Cardinal Egan headed the New York Archdiocese from 2000 until his retirement in 2009.

The idea of confirmation in a state prison might seem incongruous — except that spiritual help is already an institution at Arthur Kill, where for 15 years, the Rev. Frank Naccarato, with the aid of volunteers, has counseled, consoled, prayed with and led the spiritual activities for men wanting to learn and practice Catholicism in prison.

### Check out the mass at the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility

For McIntyre, who was brought up Lutheran, the masses celebrated on Sunday and Tuesday, and the Tuesday evening Bible study, offer a sense of purpose. "I like helping out with the chapel and how they run

it," said the Albany native. "I think it's good for me."

One by one, the cardinal confirmed each man. Joshua Factor, Randy Kuiatkowski, Richard Johnson, Gary Barber and Carl Leibach joined McIntyre in taking their confirmation names.

Some had been reared Catholic. Factor, 29, grew up in a Jewish home, but said Catholicism gave him the sense of returning home. Others arrived at yesterday's rite via other faith traditions. But in the chapel yesterday, they came together for a common goal, supported by volunteers, Catholic sponsors, peers, clergy and facility administrators.

More than the Sacrament of Catholic Initiation, the ceremony was a microcosm for connection to community, an exhibit of talent and an example of brotherly love.

The mass was celebrated with readings, prayers, music, original songs and the full liturgy and communion. For the ceremony, Louis Gelsomino learned to sing the entire liturgy. The baritone, who aspires to be an opera singer, has been studying voice formally. He also sang "Ave Maria."

Cardinal Egan, for his part, was a master teacher and delivered a mini-sermon on the story of Nicodemus — or, as he mused, his buddy "Nic," who had come away from a meeting with Jesus "unimpressed" but after more than a year would become a defender of Christ.

"Sometimes we hear about Jesus Christ and it doesn't take," the cardinal noted. "The first time you listen to the Lord, it might not take. Listen again."

And the cardinal assigned homework: Read John 3:1-21.

Earlier in the day, the cardinal was the special guest at St. John Villa Academy's 85th-anniversary celebration. He said the afternoon confirmation was a delight.

"I always like coming here because it's a great opportunity to encourage these young men and assure them that when they leave, we will be there to help them," Cardinal Egan said.

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