

16. The Sacrament of Confirmation

If Baptism is our participation in the cross of Christ (Rm. 6), then Confirmation is our participation in the Pentecost of the Church (Acts 2).

Key terms:

Chrism: The consecrated scented oil used in the sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Orders, and Baptism (for infants).

Indelible: Of a permanent and eternal character.

Seal: A permanent change in the soul resulting from certain sacraments.

Counsellor: Title of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus meaning “he who is called to be with” us.

Sanctifier: The one who makes holy.

See also: *Ex opere operato*, Form, Matter and Sacrament.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The third article of the Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Most Holy Trinity. Other names for the Holy Spirit are: Holy Ghost, and Paraclete, which means “Comforter,” “Advocate,” or “Counsellor.” The Holy Spirit is depicted in Scripture as a wind (Acts 2:2; Ez. 37:9-14; John 3:8; John 20:22), a flame (Is. 4:4; Mt. 3:11-12; Lk. 3:16-17, 1 Thess 5:19) or a dove (Mt. 3:6; Mark 1:10; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:32).

THE FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- He stands with us, consoles us, leads us into all truth, and draws us to Christ.
- Through the Sacraments –
 - He bestows his sevenfold gifts (Is. 11:1-4)
 - He heals the wounds of sin, turning us instead to his fruits of Christ-like holiness (Gal 5:19-25)
 - He strengthens us, enlightens us, and prompts us to charity
- He indwells in us and sanctifies us as his temple (1Cor 3:16)
- He is our instructor in prayer
- He is the source of our hope (Eph. 1:13-14)
- He is the Protector and Guarantor of the Church and the Guardian of the Deposit of Faith.

JESUS, THE ANOINTED ONE (THE MESSIAH OR CHRIST) (See Mk. 1:9-11)

- In the Old Testament, laying on of hands and anointing were signs of appointment to special offices (Num. 27:23; Lv. 21:10; 1Sam 16:13).
- Jesus’ coming as the Anointed One was prophesied (Is 11:2; Dan 9:25).
- At his Baptism, Jesus was anointed for his ministry by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him while God the Father spoke his words of love and approval.

CONFIRMATION IS A SACRAMENT OF INITIATION

- In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit is poured out in the special way experienced by the apostles (CCC 1302).
- The form of Confirmation is the words “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1300).
- The matter is a bishop (in special cases, a priest) anointing the forehead with chrism by the laying on of his hand.
- Confirmation makes an indelible spiritual mark on the soul and so is never repeated.

THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION

The grace given at Baptism is matured, increased, and made deeper.

- It is a “ratification of Baptism”, “and the strengthening of baptismal grace”. (#1289) This strengthening and ratifying is understood by a greater unity with the Church. “It renders our bond with the church more perfect.” (#1303)
 - We become, even more fully, children of our Heavenly Father (Rom. 8:14-17).
 - We become more firmly united and configured to Christ (2 Cor 1:20-22).
 - The gifts of the Holy Spirit are increased and strengthened within us.
 - We are strengthened against sin, and the fruits (virtues) of the Holy Spirit are strengthened in us (Gal. 5:16-25).
 - The confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly. (CCC 1305)
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THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wisdom	desire for the things of God – directs our whole life and all our actions to His honour and glory
Understanding	enable us to know more clearly the mysteries of faith; To listen and know the heart of another
Right judgement or counsel	to discern what is right and wrong, to understand the dangers to salvation
Knowledge	enable us to discover the will of God in all things, to search for the truth
Courage or fortitude	strengthen us to do the will of God in all things
Reverence or piety	love God as a Father, and obey Him because we love Him; to be attentive to the promptings of God in every moment
Wonder and awe or Fear of the Lord	to be aware of the awesome creation of God among us.

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Gal 5:22; 2Cor 6:6; Col 3:12-15; Eph 4:2, 5:9)

Love	Shown in selfless service to others by words/deeds
Joy	Deep and constant gladness in the Lord – changes in circumstances cannot affect this.
Peace	A disciple faithful to God's will is serene, not overly anxious
Patience	The love that is willing to endure life's suffering, difficulties and routines
Kindness	Generous acts of service
Goodness	A sign that you love all people without exception and do good to them
Gentleness	Strength tempered by love giving you the power to forgive instead of getting angry
Self-control	Being in charge of your emotions and desires

EXPLORE!

Invite the candidates to reflect on the people whom they believe manifest the power of the Holy Spirit alive and active in their lives. What gifts do these individuals possess?

Share an occurrence from the past twenty-four hours in which you recognise the Holy Spirit's presence in your life.

CELEBRATING THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

Symbols of Confirmation

- Oil of Chrism
- The Laying on of Hands

The Rite of Confirmation

- Presentation of the Candidates
- Homily or Instruction
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises
- The Laying on of Hands
- The Anointing with Chrism
- Universal Prayers

The Sacrament of Confirmation — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important to see the link between Baptism and Confirmation?
2. In what practical ways do you think Confirmation will change you and your relationship with Christ and His Church?
3. If you could ask the disciples present in the Upper Room at Pentecost one question, what would you ask?
4. How do the effects of Confirmation 'take root' in a person's life?
5. What makes it challenging to witness to your faith in front of other people?
6. In what ways has the Holy Spirit nudged you to shift your attention away from yourself and toward the needs of others?

PRAYER

All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Rite of Confirmation)

or

Gospel Reflection: Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Matt. 5:13-16

Year B Mk. 1:29-39

Year C Lk. 5:1-11

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

The Sacrament of Confirmation & The Holy Spirit

Scripture

Gen. 1:2	The Holy Spirit is present and active at creation.
1 Kgs 18:16-40	The Holy Spirit falls as fire from Heaven and consumes Elijah's sacrifice to God.
Song 8:6	The love begs her beloved to make him her own as one would seal another.
Ps. 104:30	The Holy Spirit gives and sustains life.
Is 11:2	The gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Is. 61:1	Prophecy of the Spirit of the Lord anointing Jesus for his mission.
Mk. 1:9-11	The Holy Spirit anoints Jesus following his Baptism.
Mk. 9:2-7	The Holy Spirit overshadows the transfigured Jesus in a cloud.
Lk. 3:21-22	At the beginning of his public life, Jesus is anointed by the descent of the Holy Spirit.
Lk. 4:16-21	Jesus is the Anointed One of the Holy Spirit to preach the Good News of salvation.
Jn. 7:37-39	Jesus promises living water, that is, the Holy Spirit.
Jn. 14:16-17	Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, he who dwells with us and will be in us.
Jn. 14:26	The Holy Spirit will teach us and remind us of the teachings of Christ.
Jn. 16:13	The Spirit will guide us into all truth, for he speaks on the authority of God.
Acts 1:5, 8	Jesus promises the Holy Spirit who will empower the apostles to be his witnesses all over the world.
Acts 2:1-4	The Holy Spirit descends as tongues of fire on the disciples at Pentecost.
Acts 8:14-17	Through the laying on of hands by Peter and John, the Holy Spirit descends on the Samaritans.
Acts 19:1-6	Paul baptises, then confirms twelve Ephesians.
Rom 8:26-27	The Spirit intercedes for us in prayer according to the will of God.
1 Cor 3:16	Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us.
2 Cor 1:21-22	God had put his own seal upon us, and the Holy Spirit is in our hearts as a guarantee.
Gal 5:22	The fruits of the Holy Spirit.
Eph. 1:13	The Ephesians were sealed with the Holy Spirit.
Eph. 4:30	Paul admonishes the Ephesians not to sin, since they were sealing in the Holy Spirit.

Catechism

683-741	The Holy Spirit's mission, his names and symbols, his actions in salvation history and in the Church.
1127-1128	By their very action, the sacraments accomplish what they symbolise, working by the power of Christ and not by the holiness of the minister of the sacrament.
1285-1314	The sacrament of Confirmation: in the economy of salvation, signs and rites, effects, who can receive, who can administer.
1695	Christians are temples of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, teaches us to pray, prompts us to charity, heals the wounds of sin, renews us in the spiritual life, enlighten and strengthens us.
1830-1832	The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.
2670-2672	By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to pray to Jesus; we are encouraged to pray to the Holy Spirit, who instructs us in prayer, for help.