

## SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation is the second of the three Sacraments of Initiation. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist lay the foundation of every Christian life. By the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Sacrament of Confirmation is a spiritual seal of the Holy Spirit that completes the Sacramental graces received at Baptism. The effect of Confirmation is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it was given to the Apostles at Pentecost.<sup>2</sup>

1. In the latter verses of the Gospels, Jesus prepared His disciples for the forthcoming events of His suffering and death with consoling messages that, upon His departure from this earthly life, he will send the Holy Spirit who will teach them all things, guide them to all truth and specifically that it is expedient for Him to leave them in order that the Spirit would lavish upon them with those divine gifts which man cannot give.
2. The promise of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus is reflected in a number of sites in the Gospels. In the Gospel of St. John, during His discourse with His disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus says, "*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name --- he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. I have told you this while I am with you.*"<sup>3</sup> Further, He says, "*It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*"<sup>4</sup> Still further, "*But when he comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you in all truth.*"<sup>5</sup>
3. In the same discourse at the Last Supper, Jesus additionally expresses, "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it.*"<sup>6</sup> Jesus' message to His disciples is most applicable to us; if we are to laudably receive the Holy Spirit, we are to have Love, committed to the spirit of the Commandments and living in a manner as followers of Christ and children of the Father.
4. Jesus speaks of Love - - love in deed and in truth, that is, love shown in keeping the commandments is the condition of the Action of Jesus in the world. His petition to the Father to send an Advocate is efficacious; the Father will give another Advocate - one called in as a helper, pleader, defender, or patron. The Holy Spirit is considered as being everything that is required to sustain and

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<sup>1</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 358, para.1285, citing Lumen Gentium, 11) Print.

<sup>2</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (pp. 363-364, para. 1302-1305) Print.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:25-26

<sup>4</sup> John 16:7

<sup>5</sup> John 16:13

<sup>6</sup> John 14:15-17

strengthen us spiritually.

5. In the final verses of the Gospel of St. Luke, just prior to Jesus' Ascension **back** to the Father in Heaven, Jesus instructs His disciples "*And, behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*"<sup>7</sup> In the Acts of the Apostles, the subsequent book of St. Luke, the promise of the sending of the Spirit is fulfilled and recounted, "*When the time of Pentecost<sup>8</sup> was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*"<sup>9</sup>
6. The Holy Spirit manifested Himself especially through His gifts and His activity, and it is through these that we are led to realize that He is a distinct person of the Trinity. He comes, and they speak as the Spirit directs them. Thereupon, Pentecost was a grand transformation scene; the wind, the tongues of fire outwardly heralding the new boldness of the Apostles, who preached fearlessly of the meaning of the putting to death Jesus. The conversion of 3,000 on the spot completed the outward evidence of the action and effect of the Spirit. Through the invocation of the Spirit, miracles in the name of Jesus are effected, visions such as those of St. Stephen are manifested,<sup>10</sup> vision of St. Peter<sup>11</sup> and of Paul,<sup>12</sup> as well as exorcism of evil spirits.<sup>13</sup>
7. In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn more about the separate Sacrament of Confirmation than anywhere else in the New Testament. "*Now when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit for it had not yet fallen upon them: they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.*"<sup>14</sup>  
In this account, the laying of hands comes as something distinct from Baptism and it can only be performed by those holding special authority, namely a Bishop, a successor of the Apostles.
8. Confirmation, together with Baptism and Eucharist, form the Sacraments of Initiation. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is sealed in the Gift of the Holy Spirit and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ, the

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 24:49

<sup>8</sup> Pentecost – a solemn festival of the Jews, celebrated on the 50th day (seven weeks) after the second day of Passover.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:1-4

<sup>10</sup> Acts 7:55

<sup>11</sup> Acts 19:9-16

<sup>12</sup> Acts 9:1-7

<sup>13</sup> Acts 8:7-13; 16:16; 19:13

<sup>14</sup> Acts 8:14-17

Church. By Confirmation, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off “the aroma of Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

9. In conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation, all of the signs, the symbols, rites and words of the ceremony, all speak of the meaning of the Sacrament and of what Christ enacts through its minister and the disposition of the candidate. The ordinary minister of the Sacrament is the Bishop or the cleric to whom the Bishop has commissioned to administer the Sacrament in his absence. This may be due to the unavailability of the Bishop as is customary at the Easter Vigil. The candidate for the Sacrament should be in the state of grace free from any serious sin, be well prepared by prayer and catechesis, and be resolved to the responsibilities entailed by the Sacrament.
10. The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with Chrism<sup>16</sup> on the forehead, done by the laying of the hand, and through the words “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup>
11. Anointing with oil, in biblical and in other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning; oil is a sign of abundance and joy, it cleanses (anointing before and after a bath) and limbers (anointing of athletes and wrestlers); oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds; and it makes radiant with beauty, health and strength.<sup>18</sup>
12. The Sacrament of Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of Baptismal Grace. It enriches us further into the filial relationship with God, unites us more firmly with Christ, increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit, binds us more firmly with the Church, strengthens us to spread and defend the Faith by word and action -- to be true witnesses of Christ. The seven **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** that are infused in us through the reception of the sacrament are:
  - ❖ Wisdom - - - which enable us to see life from God’s viewpoint, to grasp the purpose and plan of God
  - ❖ Knowledge - - - directs us to thoughtful reflection of the mystery of God and the mysteries of the Catholic faith.
  - ❖ Understanding - - - stimulates us on knowing ourselves as part of our growth in knowing God.
  - ❖ Fortitude - - - or courage, to be prepared to stand firm for Christ and his Gospel whenever challenged.

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. 2:15

<sup>16</sup> Oil consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, which will be used in the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, used at Baptism and to anoint bishops and priests during the celebration of Holy Orders.

<sup>17</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 363, para. 1300) Print; Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Divinae Consortium Naturae*.

<sup>18</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 360, para. 1293) Print.

- ❖ Council - - - or right judgment about our moral lives and training our conscience to follow the Christian teachings.
  - ❖ Piety - - - or reverence, an act of respect for the Father who created us, for Jesus who saved us, and for the Spirit who is sanctifying us.
  - ❖ Fear of the Lord - - - to have wonder and awe in God's presence, to infuse honesty in our relationship with God, and a grateful wonder that God loves us and that we share in His life.
13. When we are responsive to the glories of Confirmation, we begin to bear the **Fruits of the Spirit**: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.<sup>19</sup> These fruits are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us.
14. St. Ambrose, one of the great theologians and given a title of Doctor of the Church, expounds “Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with His sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you, and has placed His pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.”<sup>20</sup>
15. Like Baptism, which it completes, Confirmation is given once for it too imprints the soul with an indelible mark which is a sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of His Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gal. 5:22-23

<sup>20</sup> De Myst. 2, 42

<sup>21</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (p. 364, para. 1304, cf. Council of Trent, 1547 A.D) Print.