

The Sacrament of Confirmation

Q. 203. What is the sacrament of Confirmation?

Confirmation is a sacrament that confirms or strengthens the life of the Spirit which was given to us at Baptism. In virtue of this sacrament, the faithful are obliged to spread and defend the Faith as true witnesses of Christ.

The principal sign of Confirmation is made by the bishop or priest, when he lays his hand upon the forehead of the candidate, anoints him with chrism [consecrated olive oil and balsam], and prays, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

This sacrament, which seals a candidate with the Spirit, is linked with the other sacraments of Christian initiation—Baptism and the Eucharist.

After Baptism, through the sacrament of Confirmation, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit again to Christian souls with the new grace and new strength that are needed in Christian lives. In the third century, St. Cyprian wrote: “They who are baptized...are presented to the Bishops...and by our prayers and the imposition of hands they receive the Holy Spirit and are perfected with the seal of the Lord” (Epistle 73).

Candidates renew their baptismal vows before Confirmation because of the intimate connection between Confirmation and Baptism.

Sacred Scripture

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. *Acts 8:14-17*

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. *Ephesians 1:13-14*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1285 Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace.¹ For “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. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.”²

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Catechism by Diagram

#C18-1



The Sacrament of Confirmation. Confirmation is the sacrament by which those born anew in Baptism (heart, rays) receive the seal of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and the Son. The character of Confirmation makes us sharers with Christ in His role of prophet, or teacher (sword in heart). The visible sign of the sacrament is the celebrant using chrism to anoint each candidate's forehead with the sign of the cross. Holy chrism (container of oil) is blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday. In the Latin Rite, the bishop (miter, crosier) is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. A priest may also confirm in certain special circumstances. In the Eastern Catholic Churches, priests confirm infants at the time of their Baptism.

Splendor of Truth

“By the light and the strength of this Spirit the Apostles carried out their mission of preaching the Gospel and of pointing out the ‘way of the Lord (cf. Acts 18:25), teaching above all how to follow and imitate Christ: ‘For to me to live is Christ’ (Phil 1:21).” (*section 25*)

At the heart of the new evangelization and of the new moral life which it proposes and awakens by its fruits of holiness and missionary zeal, there is the Spirit of Christ, the principle and strength of the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church. As Pope Paul VI reminded us: “Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.”... It is the Holy Spirit “who confirmed the hearts and minds of the disciples, who revealed the mysteries of the Gospel, who shed upon them the light of things divine.” (*section 108*)

Q. 204. What happens when we receive the seal of the Spirit at Confirmation?

When we receive the seal of the Spirit at Confirmation, we are prepared to (1) witness for Christ as mature Christians, and (2) defend the Faith and evangelize.

1. When we receive the seal of the Spirit at Confirmation, we are prepared to witness for Christ as mature Christians.

By Confirmation, the Christian is bound more perfectly to the Church, and he is enriched with a special power of the Holy Spirit so that he may live in the world as Christ's witness and serve his fellow men.

Thus by Confirmation, a baptized Christian becomes permanently marked as a witness and is obliged to communicate the Faith, with the price of his blood, if necessary.



2. When we receive the seal of the Spirit at Confirmation, we are prepared to defend the Faith and evangelize.

Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, the laity are assigned to the apostolate, or the general mission of the Church, by our Lord Himself. We should recall this great responsibility which we received when we were confirmed: we have the task of bringing the love and truth of Jesus Christ and His Church to others. The strength which the grace of the Holy Spirit gives us will help us each day to fulfill our apostolate, if we make a sincere effort and humbly ask for His help in prayer.

Sacred Scripture

But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. *2 Corinthians 1:21-22*

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

1302 It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

1318 In the East this sacrament is administered immediately after Baptism and is followed by participation in the Eucharist; this tradition highlights the unity of the three sacraments of Christian initiation. In the Latin Church this sacrament is administered when the age of reason has been reached, and its celebration is ordinarily reserved to the bishop, thus signifying that this sacrament strengthens the ecclesial bond.

Splendor of Truth

Love of God and of one's neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit. It is an honor characteristic of Christians to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29) and to accept even martyrdom as a consequence, like the holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments, who are considered such because they gave their lives rather than perform this or that particular act contrary to faith or virtue. (*section 76*)

**Vatican Council II**

The term “laity” is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity. *The Church, 31*

From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laymen’s right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate. *Lay People, 3*

The apostolate, through which the laity build up the Church, sanctify the world and get it to live in Christ, can take on many forms. A special form of the individual apostolate is the witness of a whole lay life issuing from faith, hope and charity; it is a sign very much in keeping with our times, and a manifestation of Christ living in his faithful. Then, by the apostolate of the word, which in certain circumstances is absolutely necessary, the laity proclaim Christ, explain and spread his teachings, each one according to his condition and competence, and profess those teachings with fidelity. *Lay People, 16*

As members of the living Christ, incorporated into him and made like him by baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful have an obligation to collaborate in the expansion and spread of his Body, so that they might bring it to fullness as soon as possible (cf. Eph. 4:13).

So all the children of the Church should have a lively consciousness of their own responsibility for the world, they should foster within themselves a truly Catholic spirit, they should spend themselves in the work of the Gospel. However, let everyone be aware that the primary and most important contribution he can make to the spread of the faith is to lead a profound Christian life. *Missionary Activity, 36*

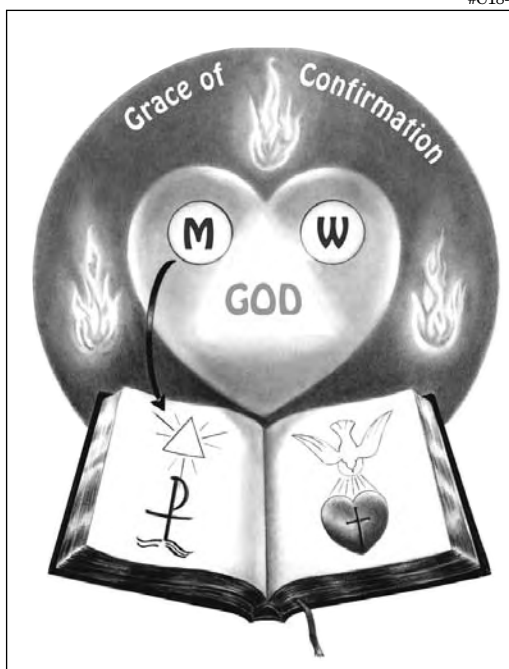
The faithful who have already been consecrated in baptism and confirmation are fully incorporated in the Body of Christ by the reception of the Eucharist. *Priests, 5*

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Confirmation strengthens the life of the Spirit which we received at Baptism. What does the seal of the Spirit prepare us to do?
2. Think of ways in which you can bring the example and the Spirit of Jesus Christ to others in your daily life.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to increase the strength which you received at Confirmation to spread and defend the Faith and to lead a joyful Christian life.

Catechism by Diagram

#C18-4



The Effects of Confirmation. Confirmation gives to the soul an increase of sanctifying grace (triangle in the heart). Hence, the person to be confirmed must be in the state of sanctifying grace. He must have the use of reason (m for “mind”), and must know the principal mysteries of our Faith (book of the Gospel): the unity and Trinity of God and the Incarnation (monogram). He must approach the sacrament with devotion (w for “will”), and with full understanding that the Holy Spirit (dove) will enter his soul (heart and cross) in a special way with His seven gifts (rays). The special sacramental grace of Confirmation (flames) is a strengthening of our faith against temptation and persecution so that we may become active witnesses to Christ.

Chapter Summary Prayer

Almighty Father, in the death and Resurrection of Your own Son, You brought us through the waters of Baptism to the shores of new life. By those waters and by the fire of the Holy Spirit, You have given each of us consolation. In union with the sacrifice of Your beloved Son in the Mass, may our lives be a total offering to You, and may we deserve to enter Your heavenly home to praise Your unfailing power there with Christ.

Lord, send us Your Holy Spirit to help us walk in unity of faith and grow in the strength of His love to the full stature of Christ. You have signed us with the Cross of Your Son and have anointed us with the oil of salvation.

As we offer ourselves with Christ in His Eucharistic Sacrifice, continue to fill our hearts with Your Spirit. You give Your Son as food to those You anoint with Your Spirit. Help us to fulfill Your law by living in freedom as Your children. May we live in holiness and be Your witnesses to the world aided by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

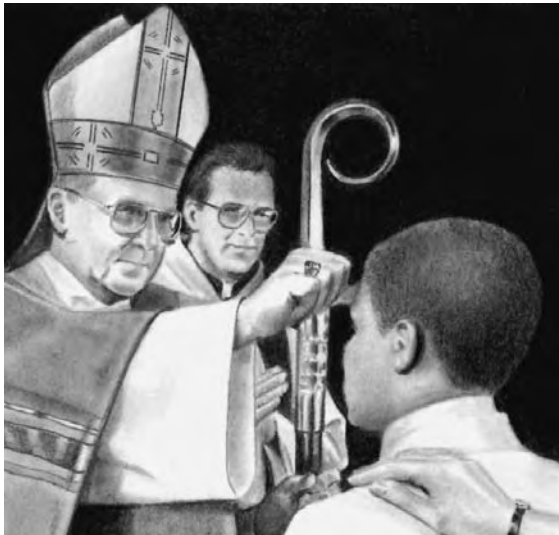
Lord, fulfill the promise given by Your Son by sending the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and to lead us to all truth. Help us to receive the gift of Your Spirit so that He may remain in our hearts and bring us to the rewards of eternal life.

God our Father, You have made us children by water and the Holy Spirit; bless us and watch over us with Your fatherly love.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, You promised that the Spirit of truth would be with Your Church forever; bless us and give us courage to profess the true Faith.

Holy Spirit, You came down upon the disciples and set their hearts on fire with love; bless us, keep us one in faith and love, and bring us to the joy of God's Kingdom. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#C18-3



Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 59

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 203. What is the sacrament of Confirmation?

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 25;

Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 107;

Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 71.

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Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 11;

On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 14, 21, 26, 41;

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 55;

On Reconciliation and Penance, John Paul II, sect. 12;

Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 12, 25–26, 107–108.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

Q. 203: God the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Paraclete. What does this mean?

Q. 204: What is the seal of the Holy Spirit received at Confirmation?
