CONFIRMATION

In this resource:

HISTORY

A brief history of the Sacrament of Confirmation

MODERN UNDERSTANDING

A concise description of the current theology of Confirmation

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

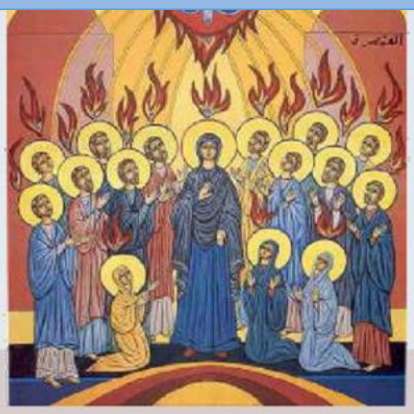
An in depth look at the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their central role in preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation



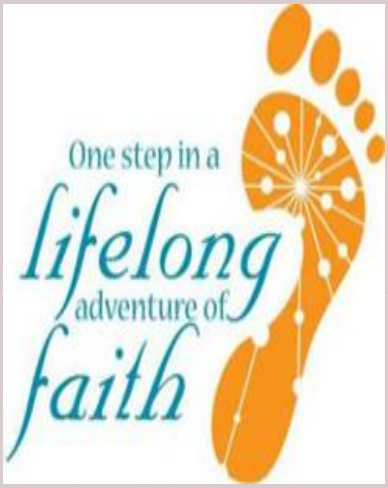
Parent/Sponsor Resource

Introduction

A Resource for Parents & Sponsors



Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of initiation," whose unity must be affirmed. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. 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." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1285.)



The goals of Confirmation preparation are:

To provide catechesis based on the above understanding of Confirmation, and also an understanding of the Confirmation Rite and its symbols.

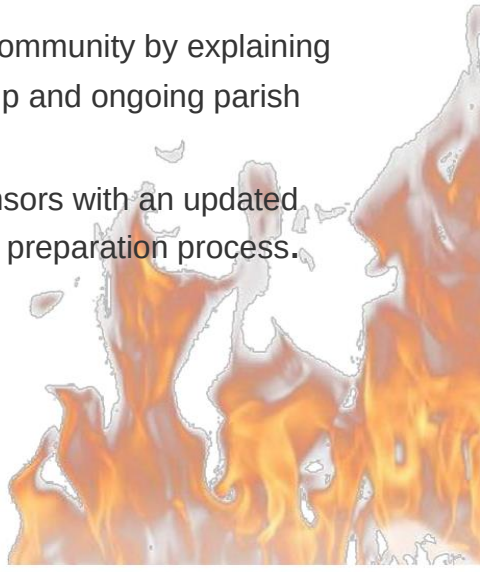
To provide a positive experience of the parish community for the candidates and their families.

To provide teaching on the duties and responsibilities of fully initiated Catholics.

To connect the candidate with the parish community by explaining and inviting participation in liturgical worship and ongoing parish services and activities.

To provide parents/guardians and/or sponsors with an updated understanding of Confirmation through the preparation process.





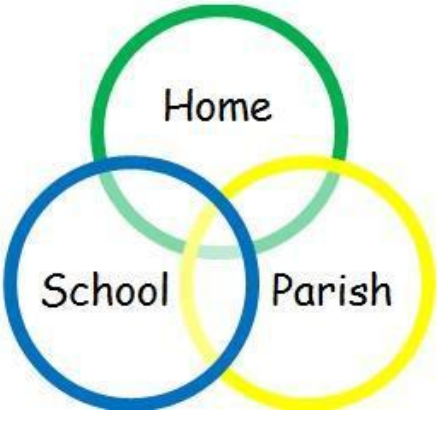
A Letter

Dear Parents and Sponsors,

With joy and hope, we present this resource to you as your son or daughter begins preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The celebration with our young women and men fills their lives with the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit as they complete the Sacraments of Initiation. Yet at the same time we must acknowledge that this is really the continuation of a life-long journey of faith, discipleship, and belonging to the community of the Church. On that first Pentecost the Apostles received the fulfilment of our Lord's promise to be with them always and to strengthen them for the task of evangelisation. Our young men and women must deepen their personal encounter with Christ through a life of prayer *(centred on the Eucharist),* a life committed to the moral values of the Gospel, a love for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and a life of service, especially to the poor and needy.

Parents and sponsors have a unique role not only in this preparation, but in supporting the young person throughout their journey of faith. This is part of the responsibility one assumed in celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism and First Eucharist. Your personal faith journey and the example of a Gospel-centred life serve as an important witness to our youth. We particularly encourage you to assist your child's journey by your prayers and your continued commitment to the weekly parish celebration of Eucharist.

We look forward to celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation with our young people and with you, their parents and sponsors.



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A Brief History...

The 4th Century

Early 4th century Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the empire. As a result: Persecutions began to dwindle.

The number of persons wanting to become Christians increased. The practice of initiating whole families and young children and infants became widespread.

The Bishop was unable to preside over every ceremony, thus the ceremony was broken up and Confirmation celebrated at a different time.



By the 5th Century

Infant baptism became the norm, with the reception of Eucharist following immediately.

The Bishop later presided over the rite which included:

- Laying on of hands.
- Anointing with oil.

This resulted in the order of reception being Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

1200 - 4th Lateran Council (1215 AD)

The order remained this way (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) until during the 4th Lateran Council when the age of receiving First Eucharist was moved to between 7-15 years old.

This restored the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation to their original order of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Council of Trent (1545-1563) to 19th Century

In reaction to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent affirmed Confirmation as a sacrament. Confirmation took on the meaning that it strengthened one to defend the Catholic Faith – a "Soldier of Christ." Theologians began to see the Rites of Initiation as three separate sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Prior to the Council of Trent Confirmation was viewed as one of the sacraments of initiation, but this understanding was stressed less afterwards.

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18th – 19th Centuries

Confirmation was delayed until after reception of First Eucharist. This resulted in more emphasis being placed upon the need to understand the truths of the Catholic Faith before being confirmed. Thus, Confirmation was more readily understood as a sacrament in which one accepts and takes on the responsibility of living out the mission of Jesus and the Church, to spread the Good News of God's Kingdom.



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Today: A Modern Understanding

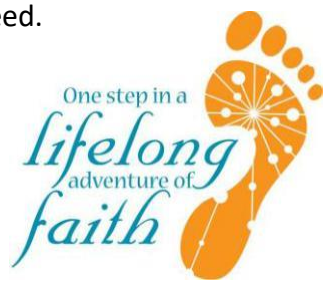
All three understandings are present in the way the Church views Confirmation.

- *Confirmation is the fulfilment of Baptism – one of the sacraments by which a person is initiated into the Church*.
- *Confirmation enables one to live their faith peacefully in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.*
- *Confirmation strengthens one to accept the mission of Jesus and the Church, to spread the Good News of the Kingdom, as one's own mission.*

Read: CCC,

page 325-326, #1285

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian initiation," whose unity must be affirmed. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For "by the Sacrament of Confirmation*, [the baptised]* 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 affirm the faith by word and deed.



The Rite of Confirmation today looks back to the earliest understanding of its connection with the other two sacraments of initiation:

Confirmation is celebrated within the Eucharist.

The candidate renews baptismal promises and receives Eucharist.

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Questions for Discussion

Think about and discuss each one of these meanings of the Sacrament of Confirmation and how it connects to your life and affects what you do in your everyday life.

Confirmation is the fulfilment of Baptism – one of the sacraments through which a person is initiated into the Christian Community - the Church.
What does initiation mean to you, that through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist you became a full member of the Catholic Church?

Confirmation enables one to live the Catholic faith in today's world.

What are some of the areas in which you need help from the Holy Spirit to live a better life as a follower of Jesus - at home, at work, in the world today?

Confirmation strengthens one to accept the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church as one's own, and to participate in that mission. The mission of Jesus and the Church is to spread the Good News of God's Kingdom.

What are some of the ways you do this? Be specific and practical.

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Signs/Symbols of the Rite of Confirmation

The following is a more in depth look at the signs and symbols of the actual Rite of Confirmation

Looking at the Rite of Confirmation will help us to understand the meaning of Confirmation:

Read: CCC, page 328, #1295, 1296

By this anointing the confirmand receives the "mark," the seal of the Holy Spirit. A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object. Hence soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their master's. Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrolment in his service forever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.

The Effects of Confirmation

With Confirmation we receive the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the apostles received on Pentecost.

Read: CCC, page 330, #1302, 1303

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.

From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- *it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba, Father!"*
- *it unites us more firmly to Christ;*
- *it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;*
- *it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;*
- *it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and affirm the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.*

Questions for Discussion:

Which of the above effects of Confirmation do you most need in your life today? Why?

Why do you want your son or daughter to be confirmed?

3 Actions

1. **Baptismal Promises:**
   This shows that Confirmation follows and is connected with Baptism
2. **Laying on of hands:**
   Since the earliest biblical times, this action has signified the calling down of God's Spirit, and during the time of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Anointing:**
   Oil has always been a sign of abundance, joy, richness, healing, soothing and radiance.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in detail

Some of the words used to describe the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1830-1831) were used differently during the time of the Old and New Testaments than they are today. Therefore, it is important to understand their meaning in the historical context to have a correct understanding of them for our lives today.

WISDOM

An openness that allows a person to recognise his or her potential, limits, and then to act accordingly *"to know oneself."*

A combination of a person's experience in the world and his or her reflection upon it.

The realisation that one must rely upon God for a vision or way of looking at life and the world, because of our human limitation.

Seeing life from God's viewpoint

UNDERSTANDING

Gift that enables a person of faith to delve deeper into what God's revelation means for his or her life

Enables an ever maturing faith so that

God's presence becomes more discernible in everyday life

A person gains deeper insight through faith, they "see with the eyes of faith."

Gives our life meaning. We recognise what

God's viewpoint means for us.

COUNSEL – RIGHT JUDGEMENT

Aids a person in decision-making – decisions still are the individual's to make

God provides direction, help, by speaking to us through creation, scripture, and other people to act justly

A person with the help of this Gift must choose to judge rightly

Decision-making



FORTITUDE – COURAGE

Used in the biblical sense – the willingness to leave behind the narrow confines of self and commit oneself to the infinite, by responding to God's call to have faith in God.

Examples – Abraham, Joseph, Peter and other disciples

Affects the way a person lives and faces life, so it is done "firmly by faith instead of by fear."

Enables a person to profess faith in action, and not only word, despite difficulties, disappointments, suffering, and lack of full understanding.

Faith in action.

KNOWLEDGE

Meaning of the word is different from its use today.

NOT knowledge of the mind, NOT an intellectual understanding of facts about God or our faith.

Knowledge of the HEART – response of the whole person to God's love – God's call – God's choice.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit continued...

KNOWLEDGE *Continued...*

An intimate relationship with God and an experience of God that touches and affects the whole person and all that one does.

Old Testament connotation - *an intimacy as deep as that between husband and wife..*

To know God personally, to acknowledge God as God, to respond in love to others with justice and service.

Response.

PEITY – REVERENCE

Refers to the love a person has for God as reflected in the reverence one has for God. Results in:

- Participation in worship of God because of love and not obligation.
- Concern for others because of God's love for them, and because God's holiness is reflected in them – God created all people.
- Participation!

FEAR OF THE LORD – AWE AND WONDER

to owe allegiance to someone, not for negative reasons but positive ones – out of awe for that person.

Recognition of the majesty of God and our dependence upon God.

Fear – positive fear - of hurting our relationship with God, fear of doing anything to separate us from God, our loving Father.

We "fear" to hurt the ones we love.

Obedience/love/wonder/awe

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit...

Build upon faith-relationship a person already has with God.

Are drawn upon throughout one's life.

Help each person to recognize existing talents and to develop them for the good of the community, thus building up the Church – the Body of Christ.

The confirmed Christian draws upon the Gifts in whatever life situation one finds oneself.

KEY: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit enables one to live and act for others, to take on the mission of Jesus and the Church of spreading the Good News – all by using the special gifts and talents one has.

Questions for Discussion:

How do you see the Gifts of the Holy Spirit working in your life?

Which Gift of the Holy Spirit do you think you need the most in your life today?

Which Gift of the Holy Spirit do you think your child needs the most in his or her life today?

Confirmation

A Parent's Prayer

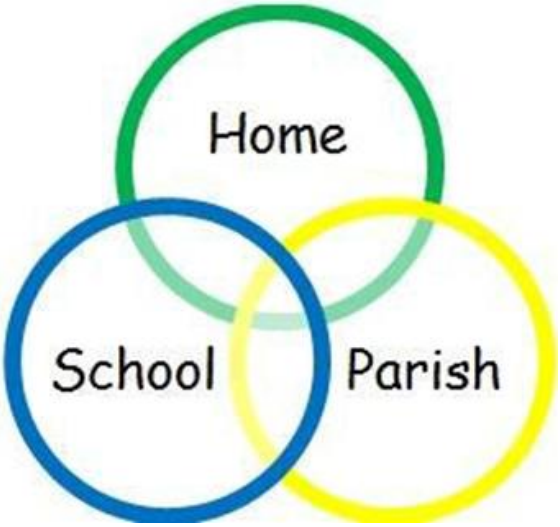
Loving God, You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings . We thank and praise you. Thank you for the gift of our children.

Help us to set boundaries for them, and yet encourage them to explore . Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh s tart . May our children co me to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent . May your Holy Spirit help them to g row in faith, hope, and love, so they may know peace, truth, and goodness .

May their ears hear y our voice .
May their eyes see your presence in all things .
May their lips proclaim your word .
May their hearts be your dwelling p lace .
May their hands do works of charity .
May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.

Amen

Amen .



It is our sincerest hope that the parents and sponsors of our young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation will use the material contained here to reflect once more on their own “initiation” into the Church.

This prayerful reflection should be a source of great joy, as one considers the Paschal Mystery and all that our Lord in His love has done for us. It should serve as a moment of grace and a re-commitment to a life shaped by the values of the Gospel, serving as an example to our young people.

Let us continue to pray for those to be confirmed in the Holy Spirit that this occasion will strengthen them for life’s faith journey and bring them that joy and peace which the world cannot give –
but can only flow from the loving Heart of Christ

