

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 15: Confirmation

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit



CCC 1285

1. The sacrament of confirmation completes the baptismal grace. In confirmation the faithful are strengthened by the Holy Spirit and bound more closely to the Church, so that they have a greater obligation to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.

Confirmation in the Economy of Salvation

Ex 13:21

2. During the Exodus, God led His people out of Egypt towards the Promised Land with a pillar of cloud/fire.

Ex 19:5-6

3. At Sinai, God adopted Israel as His specially chosen people, made a covenant with them and gave them the Torah.

CCC 1286
Isa 61:1

4. The prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission.

Mk 1:9

5. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit on him at his baptism was the sign that he was the Messiah and Son of God. His whole life and mission was carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit.

CCC 1287
Jn 16:7, 13
Acts 1:8

6. The fullness of the Spirit was to be given to the whole messianic people. Christ promised several times this outpouring of the Spirit: *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 2:3-4

7. Jesus fulfilled this promise at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim the "mighty works of God," and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized also received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

CCC 1288
Acts 8:14-17
Acts 19:5-6

8. From that time on the apostles imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Holy Spirit that completes the grace of baptism. The imposition of hands is the origin of the sacrament of confirmation, which perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.

CCC 1289

9. Very early, to better signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (*chrism*) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," and derives from that of Christ whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit."

The Signs and the Rite of Confirmation

CCC 1293-96
2 Cor 1:21-22
Rev 7:2-3

10. Anointing with oil is a sign of abundance and joy, cleansing, healing and soothing, beauty, health and strength. By confirmation Christians share more completely in Jesus' mission and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They receive the *seal* of the Holy Spirit, which marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service forever, and the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.

CCC 1297-98

11. The bishop consecrates the sacred chrism for his diocese (in the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday). If celebrated separately from baptism,

CCC 1299	<p>confirmation begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and the profession of faith.</p> <p>12. In the Roman rite the bishop extends his hands over the group of confirmands and invokes the outpouring of the Spirit:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><i>“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 judgment 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.”</i></p> </div>
CCC 1300	<p>13. The sacrament is conferred through the anointing of chrism on the forehead and through the words: <i>“Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”</i></p>
CCC 1303	<p>The Effects of Confirmation</p> <p>14. Confirmation gives the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as granted to the apostles at Pentecost and perfects baptismal grace.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It roots us more deeply as God’s children; b. it unites us more firmly to Christ; c. it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us; d. it renders our bond with the Church more perfect; e. it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess his name boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.
CCC 1304-05	<p>15. Confirmation is given only once because it imparts on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, perfecting the common priesthood of the faithful received in baptism.</p>
CCC 1306-11	<p>16. Who can receive confirmation? Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive confirmation – usually at the age of reason in the Latin Church. It is not a “rite of passage” or “Christian bar mitzvah” but the grace of free, unmerited election. To receive confirmation one must be in a state of grace. Candidates for confirmation seek the spiritual help of a sponsor.</p>
CCC 1312-14	<p>17. The ordinary minister of confirmation is the bishop, who expresses the apostolic unity of the Church. The bishop can grant the faculty of administering confirmation to priests. If a Christian is in danger of death, any priest can give him confirmation.</p>

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the connection between the giving of the Torah at Sinai, Pentecost and confirmation?
2. How are baptism and confirmation related, and how do they differ?
3. What is the difference between confirmation and a bar-mitzvah?
4. What new responsibilities will you receive as a Christian after you receive confirmation?
5. What will be the challenges of witnessing to others? How might the Holy Spirit help you to meet those challenges?
6. What people in your life could really use your witness of Christ?