



Confirmation

What does 'Confirmation' mean?

Confirmation is a Sacrament, and the word means strengthening or deepening one's relationship with God. It enables a Baptised person to confirm the promises made on their behalf at Baptism and is also a sign of full membership to the Christian Community.

When the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred, a Baptised person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is usually conferred by a Bishop or Archbishop through the laying of hands and each participant is also anointed with oil.

Who instituted the Sacrament of Confirmation ?

Catholics believe Jesus instituted the Sacrament or Rite of Confirmation when He promised to send another counsellor to empower His disciples to bear witness. (John 14:16; John 15:26; John 16:13).

The roots of the practice of Confirmation are found in the Acts of the Apostles:

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

When is the Sacrament of Confirmation usually conferred?

The majority of Catholics are Baptised as babies before they are old enough to understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Their parents and godparents promise to bring them up in the Catholic faith following Jesus's example.

When they reach an age where they are able to understand the difficulties and challenges of living the faith, they are invited to confirm the promises made on their behalf at baptism through Confirmation.

The effect of the Sacrament of Confirmation is a special outpouring of the Spirit as granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

The Feast of Pentecost commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit from Heaven to Earth upon the 12 apostles and the Virgin Mary, occurring 50 days after Easter and 10 days after Jesus' Ascension (Acts 2:1-4).

How is the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred?

The Bishop lays his hands on the head of each candidate. This is a sign that he is appointing them to be true witnesses to Christ.

The Bishop prays that each person will receive the seven spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

He makes the sign of the cross on their foreheads with holy chrism oil. This is a sign of strength and a reminder of their commitment to follow Christ even to the cross.

Traditionally candidates will take the name of a saint. The saint will act as a patron and guide to the person seeking Confirmation. Candidates will usually devote some time during their Confirmation classes to choosing a saint who particularly inspires them.

Catholics are usually confirmed after they have received their first Holy Communion. However, this is not the traditional order for conferring the three Sacraments of Christian initiation. When an adult is initiated into the Catholic Church, he or she must receive baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion in that order.

Why receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Growth is vital to human life; the body and mind must grow to stay alive. Catholics believe that the soul also needs to grow to maturity in the life of grace, just as the human body must grow through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Catholics believe the Sacrament of Confirmation is the spiritual equivalent of the natural growth process. It builds on what was begun in Baptism and what was nourished in Holy Eucharist. It completes the process of initiation into the Catholic community, and it matures the soul for the work ahead.

What occurs during a Catholic Confirmation?

The Holy Spirit is first introduced to a Catholic on the day of Baptism because the entire Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — are invoked at the ceremony. During Confirmation, God the Holy Spirit comes upon the person, accompanied by God the Father and God the Son, just as he did at *Pentecost*. This Sacrament is called *Confirmation* because the faith given in Baptism is now confirmed and made strong. Sometimes, those who benefit from Confirmation are referred to as *soldiers of Christ*. This isn't a military designation but a spiritual duty to fight the war between good and evil, light and darkness. Confirmation means accepting responsibility for your faith and destiny. Childhood is a time when you're told what to do, and you react positively to reward and negatively to punishment. Adulthood, even young adulthood, means that you must do what's right on your own, not for the recognition or reward but merely because it's the right thing to do. The focus is on the Holy Spirit, who Confirmed the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4) and gave them courage to practice their faith. Catholics believe that the same Holy Spirit confirms Catholics during the Sacrament of Confirmation and gives them the same gifts and fruits.

Traditionally, the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity. These are human qualities that can be activated by the Holy Spirit. These gifts are supernatural graces given to the soul.