

Our Vocation: Life in the Spirit

“*Catechesis* has to reveal in all clarity the joy and the demands of the way of Christ.” Formation for the “newness of life” in Christ should be a catechesis of:

- the Holy Spirit, the interior Master of prayer and life
- grace
- the Beatitudes
- sin and forgiveness
- the human virtues
- the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity
- the twofold commandment of charity set forth in the Decalogue
- the Church

(CCC n. 1697, 741)

Most importantly: “The first and last point of reference of this catechesis will always be Jesus Christ Himself, who is the ‘the Way, and the Truth, and the Life’” (CCC n. 1698).

Spiritual Retreat

In order to develop an ongoing relationship with Christ and the Church, young people are to participate in a spiritual Retreat. The emphasis is to focus on lifelong obligations and a commitment to live the Christian Faith.

Service Projects

As Christians, we have a lifelong commitment to serve God by serving others, especially those in need. This service of others is to include the parish, the wider community, and the missions of the universal Church.



Sponsor and Parish Mentor

Each confirmand is to have a sponsor. It is also suggested that the young people are partnered with a parish mentor who can be a source of encouragement for them when the sponsor cannot be present. Qualifications for a sponsor are such that he or she:

- must be at least sixteen years old;
- may not be a natural or adoptive parent of the confirmand (a parent or any other baptized, confirmed

Catholic may be a proxy if the sponsor cannot attend);

- must be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith (Baptism, Penance, Confirmation, and Eucharist);
- must be leading a life in harmony with the Faith; and
- must be free of any canonical impediment.

After Confirmation, sponsors, along with parents and siblings should continue to assist the confirmandi in continuing to grow in knowledge of the Faith; in worship of God; in faith, hope, and charity; and to perform works of service.

Sacrament of Reconciliation in Preparation to Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation

Preparation is to include a Rite of Reconciliation for confirmandi, parents and the sponsor. The individual Sacrament of Confession is necessary to dispose properly the confirmand to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Confirmation Name

The confirmandi are to choose prayerfully a Christian name, a derivative of a Christian name, or their Baptismal name, and they are to see the connection of the name to the Christian Faith. The easiest way of making the connection is to choose a saint’s name. The confirmandi should be familiar with the saint/blessed whom they chose as a new patron, and be able to articulate how the saint was a faithful witness to Christ or what the name means in relationship to the Faith in the Church. The saint in Heaven becomes a “friend” and intercessor on the young person’s pilgrimage of life. One of the ways young people are called to be holy is by allowing the Christian name to manifest its particular significance in their lives.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation

The young people are to dress appropriately in coming to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Modest attire is expected in Church. This means hairstyle or ornamental jewelry should not draw attention to self, and clothing should not draw attention to any particular part of the body.

The Sacrament of Confirmation confirms us in our faith to bear witness to Jesus Christ

The great gift of the Sacrament of Confirmation is that it strengthens the person as a disciple to give witness rather than simply expressing the person’s determination as a disciple to give witness. The Sacraments are not about what we have accomplished or desire to do for God. The Sacraments are God’s free gift of grace to us. At the same time, these gifts of God’s love involve an obligation as a disciple to bear witness to God’s love in word and deed by

choosing to cooperate with the grace given. (cf. Origins, CNS Documentary Service, Bishop Alvaro Corrada)

The Holy Spirit lives in the depths of our minds, teaching us the truth that Jesus Christ came to reveal to us. He is the strength of our mind, allowing us to believe that Jesus is truly the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. John 14:6). This wisdom leads to greater conviction in following Christ.

The Holy Spirit is also the strength of our hearts — our wills — which can be so fearful, compromising and weak. We constantly need the Gift of Fortitude to withstand the difficulties of daily life (cf. John A. Hardon, S.J. Advanced Catholic Catechism Course. Inter Mirifica: Bard-stown, Kentucky, p. 116-118).

Through this special strength of the Holy Spirit in both mind and heart, we are enabled as disciples of Jesus Christ to live out the Christian life, “to spread and defend the faith by word and action as His true witnesses, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross” (CCC n. 1303).



For more information or inservices on the Sacrament of Confirmation, please contact:

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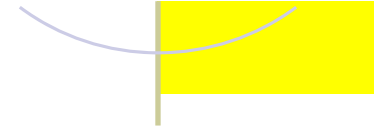
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The Sacrament of Confirmation

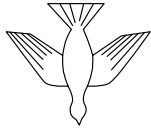


Send Forth Your Spirit



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Why is the Sacrament of Confirmation necessary in the Catholic Church?



In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are reborn into the new life in Christ by receiving sanctifying grace into our soul, which is a share in God's Divine Life. Baptism is necessary because we are born without sanctifying grace due to our being separated from God through Original Sin. As the Blessed Trinity dwells within the soul because of Baptism, the person becomes an adopted child of God and a member of the Catholic Church.

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit enriches the soul with the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. These virtues allow us to believe in God, to trust in His promises and to love God and our neighbor. The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit aid us in making decisions in conformity with God's will, which lead to a life of interior joy and peace. The seven Gifts are Wisdom, Fortitude, Knowledge, Fear of the Lord, Understanding, Right Counsel and Piety.

The three Theological Virtues and the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in Baptism for personal sanctification, to make us holy. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit *strengthens* the Virtues and the Gifts so that we can be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ by living our faith "out loud".

In our culture today, young people are bombarded with the lie that their value as a human being is based on how they look and the materials they possess. This contradicts the truth that our dignity comes from being a child of God, created in His image and likeness, and destined for eternal life with God in Heaven.

Furthermore, young people face a society that is indifferent to God and focuses on self. Selfishness only leads to hopelessness and despair. Why? We find meaning in life through self-giving love: giving of ourselves to God, to others in friendship and service, and possibly to a spouse in a life-long commitment of the Sacrament of Matrimony. We were created by God and

for God, and our joy lies in knowing, loving and serving God and our neighbor through self-giving love.

The graces received in Confirmation allow us to grow in goodness through the moral virtues. The virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity inform, and give life to, the moral virtues of prudence (making good decisions), justice (giving to God and others what is due), fortitude (courage) and temperance (providing balance with desires). Under temperance falls chastity, the spiritual power that guards against falling into the trap of using another person, or being used, as an object for sexual pleasure. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit complete and perfect these same virtues.

As you can see, the Virtues and Gifts that are *strengthened* in Confirmation are crucial for our young people to know who they are in Christ, to protect their dignity, and to be faithful in following Him. Let us prepare well our young people to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit and continue post-Confirmation to help them grow in their cooperation with the graces of the Sacrament. Confirmation is not an end or a graduation, but a **deepening** of what was given at Baptism. The person is being called to a greater public witness of faith in Christ. Confirmation enables the person to fulfill this call.



As primary educators, parents are invited to continue the spiritual and human formation of their children in partnership with their pastor and the local parish community and to make sure that their sons and daughters receive valuable and ongoing faith formation. Advanced Bible studies and faith formation will stimulate intellectual curiosity about their Faith. Further, opportunities to form relationships with like-minded Catholic peers and the ongoing development of the habit of daily prayer will enable their children to make good decisions while recognizing the consequences of their choices. They will be empowered to take advantage of opportunities in apologetics so that they can defend what they believe while having the confidence to inspire in others the faith that comes with discipleship. All of this, of course, assists them in attaining the full measure of maturity in our beloved Faith.

Guidelines for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Involvement of the Family

"In every program of religious education and in every Catholic school, the primacy of parents as educators in the faith is to be respected and stressed. Especially at the time of preparation for the reception of a Sacrament, parents should be fully engaged in the renewal of their own understanding of that Sacrament" (*Synod V Acts* n. 146). Furthermore, active participation in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist, regular confession, daily family prayer, and Scripture reading enable families to live the Gospel life of Jesus Christ.

Period of Preparation

Young people need an adequate time of preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation for the necessary openness one needs to be receptive to the interior movements of the Holy Spirit.

"Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit — His actions, His gifts and His biddings — in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community" (*CCC* 1309).

Therefore a minimum of preparation is to be one year, and, if the pastor deems it appropriate, to extend the time of preparation to two years.

"Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit sanctifies us so that we can become saints by:

- teaching us to pray to the Father.
- prompting us to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" by charity in action.
- healing the wounds of sin and renewing us interiorly through a spiritual transformation.
- enlightening and strengthening us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true".

Elements of Preparation

God created us to know, love and serve Him in this life in order to be united forever with Him in Heaven. We come to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit through the teachings of the Church and through a daily habit of

prayer. We show our love for God through living the Faith and serving Him by serving our neighbor, especially those in need.

Canon Law expresses the importance of proper formation. According to Canon 885 §1, care is to be taken that the Sacrament is conferred "on subjects who properly and reasonably seek it." Further, Canon 889, §2 states that a "person to be confirmed must have the use of reason, be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew baptismal promises." These canons make it clear that our young people need to be formed through a comprehensive curriculum, one that should include but not be limited to helping the student:

- Develop a more intimate union with Jesus Christ in daily prayer (*CCC* 1309; *Synod V Acts* n. 149).
- Cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit as well as have a more lively familiarity with His actions, His gifts and His promptings in order to be capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities.
- Be committed to living a Sacramental Life, above all by participating in Sunday Mass each week and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.
- Comprehend how to live life in the Holy Spirit.
- Affirm Church teachings organized under the heading: Theology of the Body.
- Study the norms regarding Marriage and the Christian Life, especially the issues that form a divide between young Catholics and their culture.
- Grasp the Church's moral teachings on bioethical issues, in particular understanding the great harm and misery caused by abortion and contraception.

Personal Commitment

Those who seek Confirmation need to recognize the seriousness of their call and be committed to this time of formation. The confirmandi are to be committed to Sunday Mass, daily prayer, living by the Ten Commandments and committed attendance at the sessions of preparation. Confirmandi will renew their Baptismal Promises in receiving the Sacrament. Therefore, they are to know the Apostles' Creed by heart.