



CONFIRMATION

Texts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Confirmation is one of the sacraments of initiation

The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. Through this sacrament:

- The baptised are more perfectly bound to the Church.
- They are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.
- As true witnesses of Christ, they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. (1285)

CONFIRMATION IN THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The fullness of the Spirit was prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ

In the *Old Testament* the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission.

The *descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus* at his baptism by John was a sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him 'without measure'. (1287)

This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to the *whole messianic people*.

Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, a promise fulfilled on Easter Sunday and at Pentecost.

Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles proclaimed the 'mighty works of God', and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. (1287)

From the time of apostles

From that time on the apostles imparted to the newly baptised by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism.

The imposition of hands is rightly recognised by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation.

This in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church. (1288)

Very early on, to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil was added to the laying on of hands.

This anointing highlights the name 'Christian', which means 'anointed', and derives from that of Christ himself whom 'God anointed with the Holy Spirit'. This rite of anointing has continued ever since in both East and West.

In the East this is called *Chrismation*.

In the West, *Confirmation* suggests that this sacrament both confirms Baptism and strengthens baptismal grace. (1289)

THE SIGNS AND RITE OF CONFIRMATION

The sign of anointing

Anointing in biblical symbolism is - a sign of abundance and joy, it cleanses, limbers, is a sign of healing; it makes radiant with beauty, health and strength. (1293)

By Confirmation Christians, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off the 'aroma of Christ'. (1294)

By this anointing the confirmand receives the 'mark', the *seal* of the Holy Spirit. (1295)

This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrolment in his service for ever. (1296)

The celebration of Confirmation

The consecration of the sacred chrism precedes Confirmation. The bishop consecrates this for the whole diocese on Maundy Thursday. (1297)

The confirmands renew their baptismal promises and profess their faith. This clearly shows that Confirmation follows Baptism. (1298)

The bishop extends his hands over the whole group of confirmands. Since the time of the apostles this signifies the gift of the Spirit. The bishop invokes the outpouring of the Spirit and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. (1299)

The *essential rite* - the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: *Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit*. (1300)
The *sign of peace* signifies ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful. (1301)

THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION

The special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. (1302)

- An increase and deepening of baptismal grace.
- It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation, making 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 defend 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. (1303)
- It imprints in the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the 'character', which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him from on high so that he may be his witness. (1304)
- This 'character' perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism.
- The confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and, as it were, officially. (1305)

WHO CAN RECEIVE THIS SACRAMENT?

Every baptised person not yet confirmed can, and should, receive the sacrament of Confirmation.

Since Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist form a unity, the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time, for without Confirmation and the Eucharist Christian initiation remains incomplete. (1306)

The 'age of discretion' is the reference point for receiving the sacrament, but children in danger of death should be confirmed even if they have not reached that age. (1307)

Preparation should aim at leading toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit. Catechesis should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. (1309)

The candidate should be in a state of grace and have received the sacrament of Penance. (1310)

Candidates fittingly seek a *sponsor*, preferably one of their baptismal godparents. (1311)

THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION

The *original minister* of Confirmation is the bishop.

In the *East*, ordinarily the priest who baptises also immediately confers Confirmation. But he does so with sacred chrism consecrated by the patriarch or bishop, thus expressing the apostolic unity of the Church whose bonds are strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation.

In the *Latin Church*, the same discipline applies as in the East for the confirmation of adults just baptised, or for a person received into full communion from another Christian community that does not have valid Confirmation. [i.e. the priest confirms in both these cases] (1312)

In the *Latin rite*, the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. The administration of this sacrament by [bishops] demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ. (1313)

If a Christian is *in danger of death*, any priest can give him Confirmation. The Church desires that none of her children, even the youngest, should depart this world without having been perfected by the Holy Spirit with the gift of Christ's fullness. (1314)

IN BRIEF

- '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 baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit'. (Acts 8:14-17) (1315)
- Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds. (1316)
- A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs (1319)