

## **Confirmation**

Confirmation is the second of the 3 sacraments of Christian initiation. The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for completion of baptismal grace.

Confirmation is the sacrament through which the Holy Spirit comes to us in a special way and enables us to profess our faith as strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ in the ever-present battle of virtue, goodness, light and life against sin, evil, darkness and death.

All Catholics should be confirmed in order to be strengthened against the dangers to salvation and to be prepared better to defend their Catholic faith. We are to defend and spread the faith by word and deed.

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### **Role of Confirmation in salvation**

The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was He who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God. He was conceived of 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.” This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah’s, but was to be communicated to *the whole messianic people*. Confirmation brings us this fullness of the Holy Spirit.

### **Who should receive the sacrament of Confirmation and when should it be received?**

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

All Catholics should be confirmed in order to be strengthened against the dangers to salvation and to be prepared better to defend their Catholic faith.

The Latin tradition gives “the age of discretion” as the reference point for receiving Confirmation, but in danger of death, children should be confirmed even if they have not yet attained this age.

Although Confirmation is sometimes called the “sacrament of Christian maturity”, we must not forget, as St. Thomas reminds us, that the age of the body does not determine the age of the soul. Many children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood.

To emphasize the unity of Baptism and Confirmation, the Eastern Church celebrates a “double sacrament”, Confirming at the time of Baptism.

### **What is necessary to receive Confirmation properly?**

To receive Confirmation properly it is necessary to be in the state of grace and to know well the chief truths and duties of our religion. These truths and duties are found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*<sup>1</sup>, simpler catechisms derived from it, or from previous major Catechisms of the Catholic Church or simpler versions of them, such as the *Baltimore Catechism*<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, 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.

### **Effects of Confirmation**

Confirmation:

- 1) Brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.
- 2) Increases sanctifying grace.
- 3) Roots us more deeply as children of God

- 4) Unites us more firmly to Christ
- 5) Renders our bond with the Church more perfect.
- 6) Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us.
- 7) Imprints a spiritual and indelible sign, called a character, on the soul which marks us as a soldier in the army of Christ.
- 8) Gives us sacramental grace which helps us to live our faith loyally and to profess it courageously and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

#### **What are our weapons as soldiers in the army of Christ?**

- 1) **Prayer** – Our most powerful weapon, especially the Mass.
- 2) **Sufferings and sacrifices** – These help to cure our own souls of the inclination to evil, but also help to save the souls of others.
- 3) **Good example** – Living a good life according to God’s commandments and Beatitudes is more powerful than the words we say.
- 4) **Encouragement** – A Catholic who never tries to encourage others to return to the Sacraments or to live by God’s laws is a soldier who lets the enemy win without putting up a fight.

#### **Who is the usual minister of Confirmation?**

The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop.

In the Eastern Church, ordinarily the priest who baptizes also confirms, but he does so with the sacred chrism consecrated by the bishop.

For grave reasons, priests may confirm in place of the bishop, with the bishop’s permission.

Any priest may confirm a Catholic in danger of death, for the Church desires that none of her children, even the youngest, should depart this world without having been perfected by the Holy Spirit.

#### **Celebration of Confirmation**

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism, in the form of a cross, 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”.

The chrism is the holy oil consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday.

The use of chrism signifies strength of the soul.

The laying on of hands, since the time of the apostles, has signified the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The bishop may or may not give a small tap on the cheek. This is to remind the person that he must be ready to suffer everything, even death, for the sake of Christ.

#### **Confirmation sponsors**

Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a sponsor. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents.

#### **Studying the Catholic faith after Confirmation**

It is important to study our Catholic faith even more earnestly after Confirmation in order to be strengthened against the dangers to salvation and to be better prepared to defend the Catholic faith.

### **Confirmation gives grace to prevail over Satan – A Story (Ref. 3)**

#### **“THE YOUNG SPANISH GENTLEMAN”**

A young Spanish gentleman had spent his youth in doing evil, daily adding sin to sin. But God, in His mercy, gave him a special grace which showed him the end to which he was going. He took the resolution of beginning at once a holy life and of repairing the past by works of mortification and penance.

He kept his resolution, and in a short time became as remarkable for his piety as he had formerly been for his evil deeds.

But Satan was filled with rage, because a soul which he had considered to be his own for ever had been snatched from him. He put before him temptations more terrible than ever; but the young man immediately raised his mind to Heaven to ask for grace and help, and he always overcame them.

Satan, seeing that he could not succeed in this manner, next tried to throw him into despair, by bringing before his mind the sins of his youth, and by showing him their enormity, and the little penance he had done for them.

One day he appeared to him under the form of a terrible spectre (a disturbing ghostly apparition), dragging after him heavy chains, and pretending that he had come for the purpose of taking him to Hell, to punish him for all the crimes of his life.

The young man, without the least sign of fear, said to him: “Satan, you do not make me afraid. I do not fear you, because God is stronger than you are, and Jesus Christ has merited for me the grace of pardon. I am not afraid of God, for I love Him, and He sent His Son Jesus from Heaven not to destroy my soul, but to save it. As for yourself, O wicked one, I tell you again that I do not fear you, and what is more, I hate you; you shall never make me offend God, or even doubt of His goodness.

The Devil, hearing these words, fled in confusion and left the young man in peace.

The Devil sometimes changes himself into an angel of light to deceive us – that is to say, he often tries to gain our souls by praising our good works, and exciting thought of pride and self-conceit in our hearts.

### **References**

- 1) Catechism of the Catholic Church**, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, pp. 325-333.
- 2) Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism**, Official Revised Edition, No. 2, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1962, pp. 157-161.
- 3) Chisholm, Rev. D., The Catechism in Examples, Volume IV, Grace: The Sacraments**, Roman Catholic Books, Ft. Collins, CO, first published in 1919, pp. 88-89.