

Faith in Five – Adults The Sacrament of Confirmation



1. The **Sacrament of Confirmation** is one of three sacraments for Christian initiation, the



other two being Baptism and Eucharist. While Baptism is the initial gift of the Holy Spirit, in Confirmation we are more perfectly bound to the church and become enriched and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. We become true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. This sacrament, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1285, is necessary for the completion of grace and received only once. **(Infographic– With expressed, written permission from www.catholic-link.org)**

2. The word, **confirmand** means a candidate for confirmation. (plural, **confirmandi**)
3. Before he died, Jesus promised that the Spirit would be given to the Apostles and to the entire Church. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, and the apostles began to proclaim the mighty works of God. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The scriptural basis for confirmation can be found in Acts, 8:14-17: “Now when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For he was not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit”.

4. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, perpetuating the grace of Pentecost in the Church. Anointing in the sign of the cross using Chrism oil, highlights the name “Christian” which means “anointed”. The anointing is a spiritual seal of the Holy Spirit. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, that is, 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" (CCC, 1294).

5. In the order of sacraments, Confirmation is listed as the second sacrament, before Communion. Confirmation strengthens the Christian Initiation begun in Baptism. When an adult receives baptism, they are immediately Confirmed before participating in the Eucharist. When Confirmation preceded First Holy Communion, it was easily seen as a preparation to full celebration with the community. In the Middle Ages, it became commonplace to teach that Confirmation was the sacrament of maturity, identifying those who were old enough to lead responsible Christian lives.

Pope Pius X in 1910 made it possible for seven-year-old children to receive Communion, making Confirmation the last Sacrament of Initiation to be celebrated. The rite of Confirmation can be given as early as age seven though it is more commonly received around age 13. In 1932, the traditional order of administering the three sacraments was changed and Confirmation was allowed to be administered after the first Holy Communion. It still considered as the second sacrament, leading to Eucharist and must be conveyed through catechesis ([Source](#)).

6. The Catholic Church states that although the sacrament of Confirmation may be seen as the Sacrament of Christian maturity, this does not equate to spiritual maturity. "We must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need 'ratification' to become effective" (CCC, 1308).

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 (CCC, 1319).

7. To adequately prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation, catechesis "should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community". Preparation should lead the confirmand into closer union with Christ and a greater understanding of the Holy Spirit's influence in one's life.
8. In the Roman Catholic church, confirmandi have an opportunity to pick a confirmation name for themselves. This practice provides the faithful an opportunity to adopt a new patron saint in their devotional lives. Typically, confirmandi are encouraged to pick a saint's name that they closely associate with or aspire to become like. This encourages each one to recognize their anointing and special role in God's work. For further study: [Choosing a confirmation saint name](#)
9. The minister of Confirmation is the bishop. Bishops, being successors to the apostles, unite those who receive the sacrament with the apostolic origins of the church, and her mission of bearing witness to Christ (CCC,1313).

The Roman Rite of Confirmation occurs in the context of the Mass. Being the third sacrament of initiation given, Confirmation is reserved to baptized persons that have received their first Holy Communion. After the pastor presents the candidates for Confirmation to the bishop, an opening prayer is offered, and the bishop will give the homily. The confirmandi make a profession of faith by renewing their baptismal vows, then receive the blessing from the bishop with the laying on of hands and anointing with chrism. Along with their sponsor, the candidate approaches the bishop individually (or the bishop approaches them). The sponsor will place their right hand on the candidate's shoulder and the confirmation name is stated. After dipping his thumb in the chrism, the bishop traces the Sign of the Cross on the confirmand's forehead saying, "[Name], be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit". The confirmand then responds, "Amen," and the bishop extends a sign of peace. The Mass continues with Prayers of the Faithful, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rite.

10. Those who attend Catholic catechism classes may view Confirmation as the end point, yet in reality, the spiritual life is just beginning of maturing discipleship. Learning the faith may be formally over, but **living the faith** is where the confirmed need our prayerful support and mentorship.

To help the confirmed become an effective witness for Christ, it is the virtuous job of the sponsor and parents to continue and encourage the confirmed:

- to develop and maintain a routine of devotion and prayer
- to help them search areas of faith to learn more about
- to maintain close relationships with Catholic friends
- to find connection with parish life through ministry and service
- to be honest about your own faith, share with them your struggles and motivation. It is our own specific witness that God can use to call out the courage of those confirmed.

"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: Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts." (CCC 1303)

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