

The Sacrament of Confirmation

This session covers pages 164–171 of The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth. For further exploration, check out paragraph numbers 1212 and 1285–1321 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Session Summary

What Is Confirmation?

- The Holy Spirit is the primary gift we receive in Confirmation, so we can grow even stronger in our calling to be Christ's disciples.
- As with all the sacraments, all three persons of the Holy Trinity participate in Confirmation, but in this sacrament we call particular attention to the Holy Spirit.
- Confirmation is one of the sacraments of initiation.
- The Catechism teaches, "The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace"¹ (number 1285).
- The sacrament of Confirmation has two primary effects. The first is that the confirmed person's bond with the Church is strengthened. The second is that the person is enriched with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Both of these effects bring to perfection the grace that is first received in Baptism, and are the basis for the following specific ways that the sacrament impacts the life of a Christian:
 - Confirmed people more closely identify with Jesus Christ. They reflect more deeply on how living by Jesus' values impacts their relationships with friends, family, and strangers.
 - Confirmed people are drawn into deeper participation in the life of the Church. They have a desire to be active in their own parish's ministries. They serve as lectors, catechists, mentors, and volunteers of all kinds.
 - Confirmed people are proud to be Catholic and want to share the joy and support they experience as a member of the Church with others.
 - Confirmed people experience a growth in the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe. These gifts help them grow deeper spiritually, in order to deepen their faith and grow closer to God.
 - Just as with Baptism, Confirmation imparts a permanent sacramental character on a person's soul.

The Rite of Confirmation

- The Confirmation Mass often begins with confirmands (Confirmation candidates) and their sponsors processing in before the bishop.
- The Mass then proceeds as usual until after the bishop's homily. This is when the actual rite of Confirmation begins. The bishop asks the candidates to renew their baptismal vows, rejecting Satan and evil and professing their belief in the Holy Trinity

and the Church. Then the bishop extends his hands over the confirmands and prays that they will receive the Holy Spirit.

- Following this prayer the confirmands come forward to stand or kneel before the bishop. The sponsor stands behind and places a hand on the candidate's shoulder. Then the bishop anoints each candidate's forehead with the sacred chrism (oil), placing his hands on her or him, and saying, "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." This is often followed by a handshake or embrace with the bishop, welcoming the newly confirmed person into full membership in the Church.
- Confirmation is not about becoming an adult Catholic but rather becoming a fully initiated Catholic.

1. Cf. Roman Ritual, Rite of Confirmation (Ordo confirmationis), Introduction 1.

(The summary point labeled Catechism is from the Catechism of the Catholic Church for use in the United States of America, number 1285. Copyright © 1994 by the United States Catholic Conference, Inc. — Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.)

(All summary points are taken from The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, by Brian Singer-Towns et al. [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004], pages 164–171. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

Talk Points

- Reflect on which of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit requires the most attention and openness to God in order to live it.
- Share what you think is the most difficult responsibility of being a confirmed Christian and a member of the Church. What is the most exciting responsibility? What is the most rewarding responsibility?

Handout 7: Permission to reproduce for program use is granted. © 2004 by Saint Mary's Press.