

Confirmation Supplemental Lesson

The Sacrament of Confirmation

LESSON FOCUS

At the Last Supper, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles to strengthen their faith and help them in the work of building the Church. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' Ascension. All Christians receive the Holy Spirit at Baptism. In the Sacrament of Confirmation, his power in our lives is strengthened. This Sacrament deepens and increases the sanctifying grace in our souls, equipping us with the special strength and gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable us to live our Christian faith better, in word and deed.

AIMS

- Students will learn that through an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Confirmation strengthens them so that they may live out their faith as their initiation into God's family is completed.
- Students will know the outline for the rite of Confirmation.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH REFERENCES

- Confirmation: 1285–321
- Effects of Confirmation: 1302–5, 1316–17
- Pentecost: 731–32
- Signs and Rite of Confirmation: 1293–301, 1320–21
- Symbols of the Holy Spirit: 694–701

Begin the Lesson

Preparation (5–10 minutes)

Use one or more of the following resources for prayer and student preparation for the lesson.

SCRIPTURE:

“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 the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14–17).

When Peter and John laid hands on the people they received the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands is a **sign of Confirmation**. The bishop will lay his hands on you and say, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We received the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Baptism, and they are strengthened at Confirmation.

SACRED ART:

“St. Paul’s Basilica,” photograph

The Basilica of St. Paul in Rome reminds us how Jesus promised that the power of the Holy Spirit will work through the Church: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). From the moment the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, his power moved through the Church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Saint Paul became a great evangelizer.

PRAYER WITH CHILDREN: Apostles’ Creed, Student Text, p. 181

Proclamation (1 minute)

(Proclaim slowly, then repeat.)

The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens God’s grace within us to assist us in living our Christian faith and being witnesses of Christ.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Student notebooks and pencils; students are encouraged to take notes.
- Optional: Items needed to make collages of the Holy Spirit (see Focus 1 Optional Activities)
- Appendix B-27
- **Y** YOUCAT
- **Y** YOUCAT Confirmation
- Diocese of Lincoln resources on www.faithandlifeseries.com

WORDS TO KNOW

Paraclete: a title for the Holy Spirit. It means someone who pleads before a judge on behalf of someone else. Jesus himself used this title in speaking about the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul the Apostle said that the Spirit would plead for us before God, and help us to pray.

witness: someone who can give testimony about someone else. In Christian vocabulary, a witness is someone who gives testimony about Jesus to others. We witness to Jesus by good example, holy lives, or even martyrdom.

sign of Confirmation: the Bishop (or in some cases a priest) imposes his hand on the head of a person and anoints him with chrism while saying, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The message is that of spiritual strength and power in the Holy Spirit.

patron saints: the saints after whom we are named at Baptism and at Confirmation. These saints pray for us in a special way and help us to reach heaven. We should learn about our patron saints and try to love God as they did.

Lesson Explanation (40–50 minutes)

Explain focus points in your own words or use the discussion points and questions.

Focus 1: The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us; he is our counselor and comforter. The Holy Spirit gives us inner strength and keeps our friendship with Jesus active and alive.

- *What do you know about the Holy Spirit? (Answers will vary.)*
- Think about the power of the Holy Spirit: On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, and because they were so filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church grew to three thousand people in one day. It doesn't stop there. The Church grew to the four corners of the earth and now is the oldest institution in the world—all of this from twelve fishermen who were filled with God's Spirit.
 - *Do you realize what kind of power the Holy Spirit has? Let's name some of the powerful things that the Holy Spirit has done in the Bible. (Answers will vary. For example, the Holy Spirit filled the Apostles with the power of God after Jesus ascended into heaven; he comes to us through the sacraments; miracles; healings; etc.)*
 - Sometimes we take the power of God for granted. Think about
 - The power of the Holy Spirit in the following: Creation.
 - The writing of the Bible.
 - The birth of the Savior, born of a Virgin.
 - When Jesus changed the bread and wine into his Body and Blood at the Last Supper.
 - When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles.
 - How through the power of the Holy Spirit we receive the grace of the seven Sacraments.
 - The removal of Original Sin from a child being baptized.
 - In Confirmation we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus' authority is passed on through Holy Orders;... and there are many, many more examples.
- *What do we know about the Holy Spirit? (Make a list on the board with the following.)*
 - The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
 - The Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son (God is pure Spirit; the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the love of the Father and Son). As stated in the Creed, the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.”
 - The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit. He proceeds from the Father and Son.

- He spoke through the prophets.
- He is equal with the Father and Son.
- He is good, all loving, all present, all merciful, all powerful.
- He is gentle; he will never force himself on us.
- He sanctifies us, comforts, and protects us (and the Church).
- ***Do you pray to the Holy Spirit? (Answers will vary.)***
 - ***Why should we pray to the Holy Spirit? (Answers will vary; lead students to understand the following.)***
 - Because we have been baptized, the Holy Spirit is powerful in our personal lives. He teaches us, he guides us, he comforts us, he shows us when we sin, and he makes us holy.
 - ***Can you name a time that the Holy Spirit worked in your life or did one of those things for you? (Allow students to give examples or witnesses; you too may want to give a witness.)***
 - The Holy Spirit is our comforter, who gives us inner strength and helps keep our friendship with Jesus active and alive. We should ask him to comfort us and give us strength in our faith.
 - The Holy Spirit helped the disciples to remember all that Jesus had taught them. He will help us too to remember all that we have learned about him, especially if we ask, which we should do when we are telling others about our faith.
 - The Holy Spirit gives us his gifts to help us live our Faith and share it with others: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fear of the Lord, counsel, fortitude, and piety. (**Note:** the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be covered in the next chapter.)
 - ***Have you ever shared your faith with others? (Answers will vary.)***
 - ***If so, did you ask the Holy Spirit for his guidance? (Answers will vary. We should always ask the Holy Spirit for his guidance.)***
- Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit and his gifts will be strengthened in you.
- ***What is one thing you can do to open your heart more fully to the grace of the Holy Spirit every day? (Answers will vary; for example, pray to the Holy Spirit, read Scripture, study, and learn the Faith.)***
 - ***When we invite guests to our home, what do we do? (We clean, prepare food, and make sure things are good for our guests.)***
 - Through Baptism we are temples of the Holy Spirit; we should prepare for him to dwell in us so that he can make a difference in our lives.
 - The Apostles spent nine days with Mary, in prayer, asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit and preparing for him.

The Holy Spirit

Titles

- Paraclete
- Advocate
- Counselor
- Spirit of Truth
- Spirit of Adoption
- Spirit of Christ
- Spirit of the Lord
- Spirit of God
- Spirit of Glory

Symbols

- Dove
- Fire
- Light
- Clouds
- Hand of God
- Powerful wind
- Water

Novena Prayers

A novena is a nine-day prayer usually made to a saint or as part of a special devotion. Often they are prayed for a special intention. Some common novenas are:

- Divine Mercy Novena: from Saint Faustina
- Saint Jude Novena: patron of hopeless causes
- Little Flower Novena: to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux
- Novena to the Sacred Heart
- Saint Benedict Novena
- Novena for Priests
- Saint Joseph Novena

- *How can we prepare for Confirmation and live as temples of the Holy Spirit?* (We too can spend time in prayer, asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We can also attend Mass, pray to our patron saint, and serve the community.)
- One name for the Holy Spirit is **Paraclete**. “Paraclete” is from the Greek word *parakletos*, which means “someone who helps and guides others.”
 - *Has the Holy Spirit ever helped you or guided you?* (Answers will vary.)
 - *What are some other names you have heard for the Holy Spirit?* (See sidebar.)
 - **Review** the titles and symbols of the Holy Spirit using the sidebar.
 - *Which one speaks to you the most? Why?* (Answers will vary. See sidebar.)

Conclusion: The Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to be our counselor and comforter. The Holy Spirit gives gifts that we can share with others.

FOCUS | OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Have the students make collages of the Holy Spirit using the titles and symbols of the Holy Spirit.
- Divide the students into groups, and have them look up the Scripture passages below where the Holy Spirit is revealed:
 - Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–34; 14:25–31; 16:12–15; 20:22–23.
- Explain that the Apostles gathered with Mary in an upper room in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:1–4) and prayed for nine days for the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the tenth day, Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. We use this as a model for novenas (a nine-day prayer). Have students begin a novena, using one from the sidebar or selecting one from a Catholic devotional.
- Choose one or more of the following for discussion:
 - **Y** YOUCAT 38: *Who is the Holy Spirit?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 113: *What does it mean to say I believe in the Holy Spirit?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 115: *Under what names and signs does the Holy Spirit appear?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 117: *How could the Holy Spirit work in, with, and through Mary?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 118: *What happened at Pentecost?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 119: *What does the Holy Spirit do in the Church?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT Confirmation 7.4: *The Holy Spirit and your heart—Pentecost for you and me as well.*

Focus 2: Confirmation. The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens God's power within us to assist us in living our Catholic Faith. We become witnesses for Christ. The matter is the anointing with the oil of chrism and the laying on of hands. The form is "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." The effects of Confirmation are an indelible mark on our souls, sanctifying grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- *What do we mean by the word "initiation"? (The act of beginning something.)*
- *What are the three Sacraments of Initiation into the Church? (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist.)*
 - The Sacrament of Confirmation completes our initiation into the Church.
 - Each of us has already received the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Baptism, but these gifts need to be strengthened in us. The Sacrament of Confirmation seals us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- It is important to understand that Confirmation is the BEGINNING of our life in the Church.
 - *Have students explain in their own words how Confirmation is our initiation into the Church and why this is the beginning of their new life in Christ. (Answers will vary. Lead students to understand that our journey of faith is a lifelong process. Confirmation is just the beginning of our journey.)*
 - *Is there anyone in your life who has a deep relationship with Christ? (Answers will vary.)*
 - *What do they do to continually grow in their faith? How do they stand out as good Catholics? (Answers will vary.)*
 - Confirmation is not about choosing to be Catholic, because you already are Catholic. It is about strengthening and completing the grace you were given at Baptism.
- *For those of you who have attended a Confirmation, who administers the Sacrament? (The bishop.) Who is our bishop? (Answers will vary.)*
- Sometimes the bishop might not be available to preside at a Confirmation. In this case, he can give a priest permission to celebrate Confirmation.
- Matter, form, and effects of Confirmation:
 - The matter of Confirmation is the anointing with chrism and the laying on of hands.
 - The form is "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - **Demonstrate** Confirmation to the students by having a few volunteers come up to be the confirmandi, and you can play the part of the priest.
 - The effects of Confirmation are:
 - You will receive an indelible mark upon your soul.
 - You will receive an increase in sanctifying grace.
 - You will be bound more perfectly to the Church.

- You will be strengthened to spread and defend the faith and receive an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - You will be strengthened in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Confirmation increases the power of the Holy Spirit within us. With Confirmation comes responsibility—responsibility to serve God faithfully and to be open to God’s will.
 - Keep in mind what the Apostles accomplished after Pentecost Sunday. Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they became **witnesses** and stood up for Jesus.
 - *Can you think of a time that you did not stand up for your faith? Name someone whom you would like to witness to. (Answers will vary.)*
 - Many people fall away from their faith or have no faith at all. *What can you do to bring them the Good News of Jesus Christ? (Answers will vary; for example, pray for them, tell them about Jesus and what he did for them, tell them about the Sacraments and the Church, etc. But most importantly be a good witness to your faith.)*
 - God moves in our lives; sometimes we may not see it. We may even think that we accomplish things totally on our own accord.
 - *Name a time you should have given more credit to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. (Answers will vary.)*
 - Jesus Christ redeemed us, and now we have hope for eternal life. However, the Holy Spirit is the one who will sanctify us or help us to be holy and virtuous. This is part of our journey of faith.
 - For example, we may have a tendency to be impatient or disrespectful. We should ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with his Spirit so that through the grace received, we will be able to change our ways. Remember, we always must make a choice to cooperate with God’s grace.
 - *Can you think of an area in your life where you need to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit? (Allow students to answer if they would like; otherwise, give students time to think about calling on the power of the Holy Spirit.)*
 - God calls each of us to follow his will. Sometimes we are more inclined to follow our own will.
 - *Can you think of a decision you made where you did not follow God’s will? (Answers will vary.)*
 - *How do you think the Sacrament of Confirmation will change you? (Answers will vary.)*
- God always works in our lives but not necessarily when or how we would like him to do so. Sometimes we have to be patient. If we have the will to do as we ought, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us. We must trust that he will stay with us and help us no matter what.
 - *Can you think of a time you became discouraged in your faith? (Answers will vary.)*

- *What should we do if God does not act in our lives when we want and how we want? (Pray, receive the Sacraments, ask for an increase in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, always trust, and never give up.)*

Conclusion: Through Confirmation, the power of the Holy Spirit is strengthened in our lives. We must choose to cooperate with the graces we receive. The matter of Confirmation is the anointing with chrism and the laying on of hands. The form is “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

FOCUS 2 OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Review the seal, or permanent mark, of the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Confirmation: In Baptism, we are spiritually marked as belonging to Christ, and the character imparted to our souls remains there forever. In Confirmation, we are made witnesses and soldiers for Christ. In a way, we can say that God sees the seal of all the baptized and says: “He’s mine” and “She’s mine.” To spread the Good News and sustain the Church, God can look upon the confirmed and say, “I’ll send him.” With Confirmation comes responsibility—the responsibility to serve God faithfully and to be open to his will.
 - *Explain how you see Confirmation as a new responsibility. How will you live out your responsibility to serve God faithfully and be open to his will? (Answers will vary.)*
- Have students read the Examination of Conscience on Student Text, p. 185. Have students list the ways they would like to have the Holy Spirit work in their lives.
- Choose one or more of the following for discussion:
 - **Y** YOUCAT 120: *What does the Holy Spirit do in my life?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 203: *What is Confirmation?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 204: *What does Sacred Scripture say about Confirmation?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT 206: *Who can be confirmed and what is required of a candidate for Confirmation?*
 - Diocese of Lincoln, PowerPoint “The Sacrament of Confirmation” in the Grade 7, chapter 19 resources at www.faithandlifeseries.com

Focus 3: The Rite. Confirmation is celebrated within Mass, during which time a renewal of baptismal promises is made. The bishop is the ordinary minister at the Confirmation liturgy.

- The Sacrament of Confirmation completes the initiation of a baptized Catholic. To be confirmed, one must have already been baptized. We renew our baptismal promises at Confirmation.

- **Renew** the baptismal promises with the students. Have students respond with “I do” for each question. Explain to students that they already made these promises when they were baptized; however, they will renew these promises in Confirmation.
 - *Do you renounce Satan? And all his works?*
 - *And all his empty show?*
 - *Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?*
 - *Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?*
 - *Do you renounce Satan, the author and prince of sin?*
 - *Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?*
 - *Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father?*
 - *Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?*
- **Review** the rite of Confirmation. Write the outline on the board (see bold words below), and explain each part. Confirmation takes place during the Mass.
 - **Liturgy of the Word** with reading of the Gospel. These are taken from the Mass of the Holy Spirit.
 - **Presentation** of the candidates. The pastor declares their readiness for the Sacrament and presents them to the bishop.
 - **Homily.** The bishop usually gives a homily on the importance of Confirmation.
 - **Promise to renounce sin and Satan.** This is usually done in a question-and-answer format.
 - **Profession of faith.** This is usually done in a question-and-answer format.
 - **Imposition of hands.**
 - **Anointing and signing with the Cross.** This is done individually. The bishop anoints the confirmandi with sacred chrism when the confirmandi and their sponsors come forward for the Sacrament. The sponsors have their right hands on the right shoulders of those to be confirmed. The anointing and laying on of hands are the matter of the Sacrament.
 - **Anointing.** “Name, be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Usually a patron saint name is taken at Confirmation. This is the form of the Sacrament.)
 - **Continuation of Mass** and special blessing of the newly confirmed.

Bishop's Invocation of the Holy Spirit

All-powerful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters
from sin
and gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them to
be their helper and guide.
Give them the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and
courage,
the spirit of knowledge and
reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of wonder
and awe in your presence.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

—*Ordo Confirmationis*

- Each candidate for Confirmation will select a sponsor.
 - The sponsor's role is to walk the journey of faith with you. The sponsor is a guide, a spiritual advisor, and a friend. Many times, the sponsor is a godparent, but he does not need to be.
 - The sponsor is someone who faithfully lives the Faith and can help you do the same. The sponsor must be a confirmed Catholic.
- **Have any of you thought about who you might select as a sponsor? Why?** (*Answers will vary.*)
 - **Share** who you picked as a sponsor and why. You might want to discuss the qualifications of a sponsor according to the diocese.

Conclusion: The Sacrament of Confirmation completes the initiation of a baptized Catholic. We renew our baptismal promise at the Mass. The bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation.

FOCUS 3 OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Have students research and select a patron saint for their Confirmation name. This can be presented or turned in at the next class. The report should be a page long and discuss how he is a model of faith.
- The students should rehearse the responses for Confirmation: Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit; R/ *Amen*. Peace be with you; R/ *And with your spirit*.
- Read sidebar "Bishop's Invocation of the Holy Spirit."
- Choose one or more of the following for discussion:
 - **Y** YOUCAT 205: *What happens in Confirmation?*
 - **Y** YOUCAT Confirmation—Chapter 12: *The Rite and what happens in Confirmation*.
- Diocese of Lincoln video "Why is Confirmation Important?"
- Appendix B-27: *The Role of the Sponsor and Patron Saint Resources*.
- For more information on the role of the sponsor, see Appendix B-27.

FOCUS 4 OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Have students write a prayer to their patron saints, asking for their intercession and aid to be mature Catholics.
- Have students write some discussion questions about the Faith that they would like to ask their sponsors.
- For more information on choosing a patron saint, see Appendix B-27.

Focus 4: Maturity. As confirmed Catholics, we have a responsibility to live the gospel, to serve God, and to live a moral and sacramental life. Our **patron saints** can assist us in this mission. We are called to be disciples of Christ.

- Confirmation marks the *beginning* of your Christian adulthood. You will grow in maturity your whole lives, but the Sacrament recognizes you as being responsible for your growth in the faith. **Draw the chart below:**

Natural Life	Supernatural Life
Birth	Baptism
Maturity	Confirmation

- Our goal on this earth is to be disciples of Christ ... to follow in his ways, to do his will, to witness to others, and to serve the Lord in all that we do.
 - *What does it mean to you to be a disciple or follower of Christ?* (Answers will vary. Encourage students to give specifics.)
- Once you are confirmed, you will have more responsibility to keep your obligations as a Catholic.
 - *What do you think they might be?* (Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation, live a sacramental life and stay in the state of grace, continue to learn about the Faith, discern and do God's will, be a Christian example to the world, become active in your parish community, and serve others in need.)
- To be ready for Confirmation, we need to be prepared.
 - *What will you do to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation?* (Spend time in prayer, go to adoration, attend Mass, go to confession, complete service projects, journal, talk to my sponsor about the Faith.) Discuss each of these thoroughly.

Conclusion: Once you are confirmed, you will have the responsibility to live the gospel more fully, serve God, and live a sacramental life. Praying to our patron saints can help us.

Review Lesson (3 minutes)

- The Holy Spirit sanctifies us; he makes us holy by giving us inner strength to keep our relationship with Jesus active and alive. He is our counselor and comforter.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens God's power within us to assist us in being disciples of Christ.
- The effects of Confirmation are an indelible mark on our souls, sanctifying grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Confirmation is celebrated within Mass, during which time a renewal of baptismal promises is made. The bishop is the ordinary minister at the Confirmation liturgy.
- As confirmed Catholics, we have a responsibility to live the gospel, to serve God, and to live a moral and sacramental life.

Application (10–20 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following for discussion.

- Have the students write eyewitness accounts of Pentecost. These accounts may be in the form of a letter or a newspaper article.
- Tell students that in Baptism we receive an indelible mark that makes us children of God. **How does Confirmation strengthen our relationship with God?** (By being fully bonded to the Church, we become witnesses to Christ. Confirmation will strengthen God's power within us.) **Give a specific example of how you will be a witness to Christ with your friends or family. Do you need the grace of Confirmation to help you?** (Answers will vary. Yes, grace is needed.)
- Tell students that the Sacrament of Confirmation calls on all Catholics to spread the faith to others. **Name someone you know who is a witness to the faith that you could talk to about the Faith or invite to your youth group or church.** (Answers will vary.)
- Dramatize a Confirmation. Appoint a bishop, his assistants, and the confirmandi.

Celebration (5–10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following.

- Song: "Come Down, O Love Divine," *Adoremus Hymnal*, #440. Go to www.ignatius.com/promotions/adoremus-hymnal/downloadable-mp3s.htm.
- Concluding Prayer: Thank the Holy Spirit for his gifts.
- Petitions: Students will offer prayers of thanksgiving.

CHAPTER 19

The Sacrament of Confirmation

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 the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14–17

During the Last Supper the Apostles knew that Jesus was saying farewell to them. He was talking about going to someplace where they could not yet follow (Jn 13:36). Jesus knew that this saddened them, but he promised to send Someone who would give them comfort and strengthen their faith:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him, you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you (Jn 14:16–17).

The word **Paraclete** means counselor, someone who helps and guides others, an advocate. The “Spirit of Truth,” who is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, was to come to the followers of Jesus as a counselor to give inner strength and help their friendship with Jesus to

remain alive and active. He would give them all the spiritual help they needed in order to spread the Faith among others.

The Promise Fulfilled

After Jesus returned to the Father, the Apostles and other disciples of Jesus spent nine days with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in prayer, asking God to send the gift of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday the promise was fulfilled as Saint Luke tells us:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other

tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1–4).

The symbols of wind and fire reveal the powers which the Spirit gives us. Wind is an invisible but very real force: it can even lift houses and cars off the ground! Fire is something that cleanses things; for example, sometimes fire is used to clear a piece of land of shrubs and other rubbish so that new trees can be planted. So the Spirit is like an invisible

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)



power within us that cleanses our hearts of sin and selfish desires. In other words, he makes us strong and mature Christians.

We Receive the Fullness of the Spirit

While it is Baptism that first gives us the Holy Spirit, *Confirmation* increases his power within us. This Sacrament strengthens the new life we have received as infants. It helps us to witness or stand up for Jesus among our friends and classmates.

The New Testament does not tell us just when our Lord gave this Sacrament to the Church, but the day of Pentecost is usually seen as the first “Confirmation,” and throughout the Acts of the Apostles we see many instances of the Apostles confirming new believers. When the followers of Jesus baptized people, they would send for one of the Apostles to come and give Confirmation to the new Christians. Usually the bishop is the minister of this Sacrament, although he may delegate this faculty to priests.

The **sign of Confirmation** is the laying on of the hand and the anointing with sacred chrism. The laying on of hands shows us that a spiritual gift is being handed on to the Christian; the chrism reminds us of our share in Jesus’ triple office and connects this Sacrament with Baptism. The words which the bishop says (“... be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit”) tell us what gift is being handed on.

The Effects of Confirmation

Like Baptism, Confirmation gives us a seal, or spiritual mark, that shows we are Christians. It deepens the life of sanctifying grace and increases it within us. While at Baptism we were spiritual infants, now we are made spiritual adults who are given the responsibility of spreading the Faith to others. This is the special meaning and commitment of Confirmation.

In order to spread the Faith the Spirit gives us special gifts that we will learn about in the next chapter. Like the twelve Apostles we can be truly transformed into courageous followers of the Lord, who are willing even to lay down our lives for the love of God and the truths of the Faith.

The Rite of Confirmation

This beautiful Sacrament usually takes place during a special “Mass of the Holy Spirit” that is celebrated by a bishop. It is like other Masses except that the prayers and readings are all about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Catholic Christian. The administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation takes place after the homily.

First, since Confirmation is a strengthening of Baptism, the bishop leads everyone in the renewal of the baptismal vows. Once again we reject sin and Satan; we profess the Creed and profess our loyalty to Jesus. Then the bishop stretches out his hands over the group to be confirmed while praying:

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. *Amen* (Rite of Confirmation).

After this comes the actual administration of the Sacrament through the anointing with sacred chrism and the laying on of hands. Each candidate, together with his sponsor, comes before the bishop. The bishop dips his right

thumb into the chrism and places his hand on the head of the person being confirmed, making the Sign of the Cross with the chrism on the forehead of the candidate, while saying:

(Confirmation name), be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

The newly confirmed answers, “Amen.” The bishop then says, “Peace be with you,” and the newly confirmed answers, “And with your spirit.” Through this sacred rite the person has been sealed with the Spirit and has received the outpouring of his powerful gifts, which he received at Baptism. (Of course, to receive this gift most fruitfully, we must come to our Confirmation in the state of grace and with a spirit of faith in God.) The Mass then continues as usual, and at the end a special blessing is given to the newly confirmed Catholics.

Living as Mature Christians

The closing prayer for the Mass of the Holy Spirit reveals how we are to live as mature followers of Jesus:

God our Father, complete the work you have begun and keep the gifts of your Holy Spirit active in the hearts of your people. Make them ready to *live his gospel* and eager to *do his will*. May they *never be ashamed to proclaim to all the world Christ crucified*, living and reigning for ever and ever. *Amen* (Rite of Confirmation).

This is a very big mission for the new adult Christians! But the Holy Spirit helps us to carry it out. We can see how the Holy Spirit strengthens Christians by considering the lives of the saints. They show us that everyone, no matter what age or situation in life, can live the gospel, do God’s will, and proclaim Jesus to others. This is the main reason why we receive

baptismal, and sometimes confirmation, names. We are placed under the spiritual protection of one of God’s saints to whom we pray and who prays for us and inspires us by the example of his or her life. This holy person becomes our **patron saint**.

Words to Know:

Paraclete witness
sign of Confirmation patron saints

- Q. 148** *What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?*
The Sacrament of Confirmation makes us more perfect Christians and soldiers of Christ by means of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the strengthening of his gifts which we first received at Baptism (CCC 1285, 1316).
- Q. 149** *What is the matter of Confirmation?*
The matter of Confirmation is the laying on of the hand and anointing with sacred chrism (CCC 1293, 1300).
- Q. 150** *What is the form of Confirmation?*
The form of Confirmation is the following words: “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1300).
- Q. 151** *Who is the minister of Confirmation?*
The ordinary minister of Confirmation is a bishop, although a priest may receive the special faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1313).
- Q. 152** *How does the bishop administer Confirmation?*
The bishop administers Confirmation to the one being confirmed by anointing him 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” (CCC 1300).
- Q. 153** *How does Confirmation make us more perfect Christians?*
Confirmation makes us more perfect Christians and witnesses of Jesus Christ by giving us an abundance of the Holy Spirit, his grace and his gifts, which confirm and strengthen us in faith and in the other virtues (CCC 1303).

Q. 154 *What does the anointing on the forehead in the form of a cross signify?*

The anointing on the forehead in the form of a cross signifies that the confirmed person, as a brave witness of Jesus Christ, should not be ashamed of the Cross nor fear enemies of the Faith (CCC 1295–96).

Q. 155 *Who are the sponsors in Confirmation?*

The sponsors should be good Christians in order to give good example and spiritual assistance to those who are confirmed (CCC 1311).

Q. 156 *What are the duties of one who is confirmed?*

One who is confirmed has the duties of witnessing to and defending the Faith, and continuing to live his baptismal promises (CCC 900, 1303).

