

## Confirmation

Let me start off by saying what confirmation is not even though you may have heard it before. It is not making the person an adult Catholic. There are many things in the church they are not yet permitted to do. The other term that is used is that you are a soldier for Christ and although there are some elements in that description that may be true it is not a good description.

What is confirmation and why is it given?

In summary confirmation is the completion and strengthening of baptism. It is given because we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit just like the Apostles did at Pentecost. As I go through a few points we can see how confirmation and baptism go together.

### A little background

In early Christianity, baptism and confirmation (with a laying on of hands) was done together at the same time and it was performed by the bishop. As the number of the faithful grew and moved into rural areas it became impossible for the bishop to attend to all baptisms and then priests were given the authority to baptize and the bishop would complete the baptism with confirmation when he came to town as confirmation was reserved for the bishop.

As infant baptism became more prevalent the separation in time between baptism and confirmation became more regular. Currently for adults like at the Easter vigil, they are baptized and confirmed at the same time.

At Pentecost when the apostles went from hiding in fear to going out boldly proclaiming the mighty works of God after receiving the Holy Spirit.

We see in Acts chapter 2 that the newly baptized, received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You'll remember that in baptism we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit detailed in Isaiah chapter 11 (Acronym WUFFPCK). So the question would be do they receive something new at confirmation. The answer is no. The same gifts are given, as confirmation is the completion of baptism.

The term confirmation comes from confirming the sacrament of baptism not that the candidate is confirming his faith.

Remember that the apostles received the coming of the Holy Spirit twice. The first was on Easter Sunday as seen in Jn 20:22, And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. This was for their own salvation. They again received the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost, "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were".

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit.

After this second outpouring of the Holy Spirit the apostles left their hiding places and went out to boldly proclaim the good news.

So for them the first reception of the Holy Spirit was for their salvation. The second was for the salvation of others.

It is the same for us. Baptism is for our own salvation and confirmation strengthens us for the salvation of others.

With this seal the candidate is marked. The mark is a sign of who you belong to. In 2Cor 1:21-22 we hear "it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee".

Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and their guide. He then calls that they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When the bishop (or a priest that the bishop has delegated) anoints the forehead he says "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit". This is the essential rite of confirmation.

Confirmation like Baptism is given only once and is permanent.

Confirmation can be given at any time after the age of reason which is generally 7 years old. In our diocese it is in eighth grade. The age is at the discretion of the local bishop.

For all sacraments (except Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick) we should not be in a state of mortal sin and all candidates for confirmation (except the newly baptized) are expected to receive Reconciliation before Confirmation.

The minister of Confirmation is the bishop, but since he cannot be in two places at once he can delegate a priest to confirm the candidates. This is most usually at the Easter vigil when all parishes are confirming at the same time. In an emergency any priest can confirm someone, but a lay person or Deacon cannot.

Confirmation is intimately connected to baptism. Baptism gives the Holy Spirit to bring us into the family of God. Confirmation gives the Holy Spirit to send us on a mission. The mission of Jesus Christ. Confirmation strengthens the family of God.