

Confirmation - PARENTS Discussion Points

Lectio: Confirmation – Session 1 – The Misunderstood Sacrament

The Sacrament of Confirmation is one of the most misunderstood sacraments in the Church.

1. Introduction – What is Confirmation?
2. How to approach studying Confirmation
 - a. Look at the scriptural roots
 - b. “Sacraments are ‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ” (CCC 1116)
 - c. The Power given in Confirmation is a “special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302).
3. Holy Spirit in the Old Testament
 - a. Hebrew *ruah* means spirit, breath, & wind.
 - b. Hovering over the waters of creation (Gen. 1:1-3)
 - c. The fire of God at Mount Sinai (Ex. 10:16-18, 20)
 - d. The power of God coming upon David (1 Sam 16:12-13)
4. Holy Spirit in the New Testament
 - a. Jesus reveals the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person
 - b. “He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17)
 - c. Greek *parakletos* (Paraclete): “someone called to your side”; also translated as “advocate,” “counselor,” or “comforter”
 - d. “He will teach you all things” (Jn 14:26)
 - e. “He will bear witness to me” (Jn 15:26)
5. Mystery of Confirmation
 - a. Confirmation is mysterious because the Holy Spirit is mysterious
 - b. “New Testament ... gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit” (St. Gregory - CCC 689)
 - c. “When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath” (CCC 689)
 - d. “The special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302)
 - e. “Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace. (CCC1303) It:
 - i. roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, ‘Abba! Father!’
 - ii. unites us more firmly to Christ
 - iii. increases the gifts of the holy Spirit in us
 - iv. renders our bond with the Church more perfect
 - v. gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith”

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 2 – The Grace of Pentecost

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' disciples during the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

What was this feast and how did it inform their understanding of the gift of the Holy Spirit?

1. Confirmation and Pentecost (CCC 1302)
2. Jewish Roots of Pentecost
 - a. Pentecost: the Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:15-17)
 - b. Celebrated the 50th day after Passover
 - c. Harvest festival offering 1st fruits, an unbloody thanksgiving sacrifice
 - d. Celebrated Israel receiving the Torah (Law) when the Lord descended upon Mt. Sinai in fire (Ex. 19)
 - e. Jewish feasts have both an agricultural meaning & historical significance
3. What does Jesus say about Pentecost?
 - a. At the Last Supper, he promises the Father will send an Advocate (Jn 14:16-17)
 - b. After his Resurrection, the disciples must remain in Jerusalem until they are “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:3-5)
 - c. Greek *Baptizo*, to immerse
4. The day of Pentecost (Acts 2)
 - a. Manifestations of the Spirit “sound like a mighty rushing wind” (Greek *Pneuma*, breath or wind)
 - b. A new Sinai: God descends in fire (tongues of fire) upon the 12 apostles (new Israel) and writes the New Law on their hearts
5. Pentecost and Confirmation
 - a. Practice of chrismation (anointing) described by Sr. Cyril (4th century)
 - b. Pentecost was the traditional day for receiving Confirmation
 - c. St. Therese of Lisieux knew what she would receive in Confirmation was what the apostles received at Pentecost
 - d. Confirmation “perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church” (Pope St. Paul VI - CC 1288)
6. Confirmation gives us the same power that the apostles received at Pentecost – the power to evangelize.

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 6 – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Confirmation bestows a number of gifts upon those who receive the sacrament. As with any gift, we must know the purpose of the gift and how to use it in order to truly benefit from it.

1. Catechism on the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit:
 - a. “Confirmation ... increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us” (CCC 1303)
 - b. These gifts “belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.”
 - i. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them” (CCC 1831)
 - c. These gifts are not independent of Jesus
 - d. Virtue: a habitual and firm disposition to do the good
2. Why 7 gifts (Is 11:1-3)?
 - a. Hebrew text lists only 6 gifts;
 - i. Greek translation (Septuagint; LXX) has 7
 - b. “A rod shall come out of the root of Jesse” anticipates the messiah
 - c. Wisdom (*sophia*), understanding (*synesis*), counsel (*boule*) strength (*ischys*), knowledge (*gnosis*), piety (*eusebeia*) and fear of the Lord (*phobos theou*)
 - d. The 7 gifts 1st appear in Old testament as gifts of the Spirit of the Messiah
3. The 7 gifts in the New Testament
 - a. “I will give you a mouth and *wisdom*” (Lk 21:15)
 - b. “And to love him with all the heart, & with all the *understanding*, & with all the strength (Mk 12:33)
 - c. “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of *knowledge*” (Lk 11:52)
 - d. Joseph of Arimathea “was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their purpose and deed [*counsel*]” (Lk 23:50-51)
 - e. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit ...” (1 Cor 12:4-13)
4. Living Tradition of the Church
 - a. “God the Father sealed you;
 - i. Christ the Lord confirmed you, and gave a pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts” (St. Ambrose)
 - b. “If a person loves his brother, the Spirit of God is abiding in him (St. Augustine)
 - c. “The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1830)

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 5 – The Completion of Baptism

Confirmation and Baptism are intimately linked and at the same time distinct. Each sacrament conforms us to Christ in a specific way.

1. Confirmation completes Baptism (CCC 1304)
2. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan
 - a. Greep baptize means to immerse; CCC 1213
 - b. Holy Spirit appearing as a dove recalls Noah and the flood; a sign of the new creation (Gen 8:6-12)
 - c. At Jesus' Baptism, the Sprit "anooints" Jesus and leads him into the desert
3. Baptism with the Holy Spirit
 - a. Baptized in the Sprit at Pentecost; "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4)
 - b. The grace of Pentecost is the grace of being baptized (immersed) in the fire of the Holy Spirit
 - c. Baptism language describes two mysteries: Jesus' Passion and Pentecost
 - d. Rites of Baptism and the laying on of hands are both the elementary teachings (Heb 6:1-2)
4. Relationship of Baptism and Confirmation in the early Church
 - a. "Through our prayer and the imposition of the hand they attain the Holy Spirit and are perfected by the sign of the Lord (Cyprian of Carthage)
 - b. "In Baptism, the Christian is enlisted in the army;
 - i. in Confirmation, he is equipped for battle" (*Catechism of the Council of Trent*)
 - c. "Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace" (CCC 1303)
 - d. Renewal of baptismal vows begins with "Do you renounce Satan?"
 - e. "You are now a soldier and have signed on for a spiritual contest" (St. John Chrysostom)

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 7 – The Sacrament of Martyrdom

The Sacrament of Confirmation gives us a special strength to spread the faith through our words and our actions. Jesus prepared the disciples for the persecutions they would face. The Holy Spirit gave them the fortitude to persevere. The Holy Spirit strengthens us so we, too, can bear witness to Christ, even in the midst of persecution or suffering.

1. The strengths to be “true witnesses of Christ” (CCC 1303)
2. Old Testament connection
 - a. God’s oil strengthens [confirms] David for the trials he will face (Ps 89:20-21)
 - b. Messiah is given a spirit of might/strength (Is 11:2)
3. The Spirit and persecution
 - a. When dragged before authorities, the Spirit will give the words to speak (Mt 10:16-20)
 - b. The Spirit of truth will bear witness when “whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God” (Jn 15:26-16:2)
 - c. “You are witnesses” and will be “clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:48-50)
 - d. Power of the Spirit to be witnesses (Acts 1:8)
 - e. Transformation of the apostles by the power of the Spirit to bear witness even unto death
4. Relevance
 - a. We cannot share the gospel without the Holy Spirit
 - b. We need strength because the task is not easy
 - c. “The armor of the Holy Spirit” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)
 - d. Role of the sponsor: to help instruct and strengthen
 - e. Old practice of slapping on the cheek: a symbolic 1st taste of opposition
 - f. “on that day I received the strength to suffer,
 - i. for soon afterward the martyrdom of my soul was about to commence” (Therese of Lisieux)
5. “Persecutions are not a reality of the past” (Pope Francis)

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 4 – The Rite of Confirmation

The liturgical actions by which the sacrament is conferred is rich in meaning.

The sacramental actions include the laying on of hands and anointing with holy chrism.

1. The Rite of Confirmation (CCC 1300)
2. Old Testament Jewish roots
 - a. Laying on of hands signifies being given a particular mission (Num 27:22-23)
 - b. Anointing with oil signifies strengthening & consecration (1 Sam 16;13)
 - c. Sealing signifies a pledge, ownership, or consecration, such as a mark or protection (Ez 9:4)
3. New Testament witness
 - a. Apostles lay hands on those baptized by the deacon Philip so they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17)
 - b. “His anointing teaches you about everything” (1 John 2:7)
 - c. “In him you ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph 1:13)
4. Living Tradition
 - a. “The bishop runs around to impose the hand for the invocation of the Holy Spirit” (St. Jerome)
 - b. “We read that only the apostles ... imparted the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hand ... Confirmation given by the Church takes the place of that imposition of hand” (Council of Florence)
 - c. “After this pouring the sanctified oil from his hand and putting it on his head he shall say: ‘I anoint you with holy oil in God the Father Almighty and Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit’” (Hippolytus)
 - d. “By Confirmation Christians ... share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ & the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off ‘the aroma of Christ’” (CCC 1294)
 - e. The Holy Spirit “shall give you that heavenly and divine seal at which demons tremble” (Cyril of Jerusalem)
 - f. “Confirmation ... imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark* ... the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit” (CCC 1304)

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Lectio: Confirmation – Session 3 – The Sacrament of Evangelization

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples so they could carry out his mission. The Holy Spirit transformed the apostles and empowered them to proclaim the good news without fear. The Sacrament of Confirmation gives us these same gifts so we can participate in the apostles' work of spreading the gospel.

1. The strength and obligation to spread the faith by word and deed (*Lumen gentium*, no. 11)
2. The Holy Spirit and evangelization
 - a. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me” (Is 61:1)
 - b. Spirit of the Lord (Hebrew *ruah*, meaning breath, wind, spirit)
 - c. Messiah (Hebrew *mashiach*, Greek *christos*)
 - d. The future messiah, anointed with God’s own Spirit to bring the good news
 - e. Anointed to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty, open prisons, proclaim the Jubilee
3. Jesus’ first sermon, first act of evangelization (Lk 4:14-22)
 - a. Jesus proclaims the good news by reading Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth
 - b. Jesus teaches through the power of the Spirit
 - c. Jesus preaches in a liturgical setting using Scripture;
 - i. points to the Liturgy of the Word
 - d. Greek *euangelizo*, meaning “to proclaim good news”
4. Jesus promises the Spirit to the apostles
 - a. During Jesus’ public ministry: “Do not be anxious ... the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Lk 12:11-12)
 - b. After Jesus’ Resurrection: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:6-8)
5. Transformation of the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2)
 - a. They began to speak in tongues (languages) – reversal of Babel
 - b. Holy Spirit acts as the agent of unity
 - c. Peter gives his 1st sermon referring to Old Testament, Psalms, and fulfillment in Christ (Gospels)
 - i. – foreshadowing the Liturgy of the Word in the Mass
 - d. 3,000 converted and baptized
 - e. Transformation of the apostles and conversion of those present are both the work of the Spirit
6. Confirmation empowers us with the grace of Pentecost – the power to evangelize
 - a. Holy Spirit is the principal agent and goal of evangelization (Pope St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no 75)
 - b. Holy Spirit is the “Source and Summit” of evangelization