

The Sacrament of Confirmation

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The Necessity of Confirmation

“The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed’

(Lumen Gentium 11)”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1285).

We Are Saved by God's Grace

- Jesus said: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (*John 15:5*).
- “Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1996*).

We Must Respond to God's Grace

- Having been called by God we must repent of our sins and be baptized

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 2:38*).

- Our faith must become active through works

“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (*James 2:24*).

“Born Again” Through Baptism

As taught in Sacred Scripture

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (*John 3:5*).
- “[God] saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (*Titus 3:5*).
- “In the days of Noah, ... a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you” (*1 Peter 3:20-21*).

“Born Again” Through Baptism

*As taught in Sacred Tradition
(early historical Christian writings)*

- Saint Justin the Martyr (ca. 150 A.D.):
“[New converts] are brought by us where there is water, and are reborn in the same manner in which we were ourselves reborn.
... For Christ also said, ‘Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (*John 3:3*)”
(*First Apology* 61).
- Saint Theophilus of Antioch (181 A.D.):
“Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration (*Titus 3:5*)”
(*To Autolycus* 2).

Confirmation: the Completion of Baptism

- The Christian, newly reborn through Baptism, remains spiritually immature, a “babe in Christ” not yet ready for “solid food” (*1 Corinthians 3:1, 2*).
- Once he matures in his faith he is sealed in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through the anointing with oil and laying on of hands
- What was begun in him in Baptism is now completed, empowering him to go into the world and win souls for Christ

Confirmation: the Completion of Baptism

- In the Bible, the Apostles lay their hands upon baptized believers to confer on them “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (cf. *Acts* 8:14 ff.; 19:2 ff.)
- This practice is described in the early historical writings

“After coming from the place of washing we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction The unction runs on the body but profits us spiritually, in the same way that Baptism is itself a corporal act by which we are plunged in water, while its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from sins. After this, the hand is imposed for a blessing, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit” (Tertullian, ca. 205 A.D., *Baptism* 7-8).

Confirmation: the Completion of Baptism

- Confirmation is administered by a bishop, a successor of the Apostles
- In *Acts 8:14*, the Church sends the Apostles (Peter and John) to lay their hands on the Samaritans, who had already been baptized by Saint Philip
- Philip, being only a deacon, had the authority to baptize but not to confirm

The Incarnation and the Sacraments

- The Catholic faith is incarnational: Catholic beliefs and practices are based upon the Incarnation, the coming of the Word of God in the flesh
- Through the Incarnation, the invisible God became visible
“And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (*John 1:14*).
- In the Sacraments, we receive the invisible grace of God through visible means (through water, bread, wine, etc.)
- In Confirmation, we receive God’s grace through anointing with oil and the laying on of hands

The Incarnation and the Sacraments

- Jesus uses clay to heal the man born blind (*John 9:6*)
- A woman is healed by touching Christ's garment (*Mark 5:25 ff.*)
- The sick are healed by touching Saint Peter's shadow and Saint Paul's handkerchiefs (*Acts 5:15; 19:11-12*)
- Saint Elizabeth and her unborn child receive the Holy Spirit through the sound of Mary's voice (*Luke 1:41-44*)

The Effects of Confirmation

- The Sacrament of Confirmation is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the Church on Pentecost
- It is an increase and deepening of baptismal grace
- It unites us more firmly to Christ
- It renders our bond with the Church more perfect

What About Speaking in Tongues?

- At Pentecost the first Christians “were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim” (*Acts 2:4*).
- Must one speak in tongues to validly receive the Spirit?
- According to the Bible (as already mentioned), the ordinary way in which one is “reborn” is through water Baptism – Baptism is necessary for salvation

What About Speaking in Tongues?

- Speaking in tongues and the other the charismatic gifts are extraordinary experiences of the Spirit
- These gifts are given for the building up of the Church, but are not necessary for salvation
- In most cases, charismatic experiences signify not a new reception of the Spirit, but a stirring of the Spirit already received in Baptism

What About Speaking in Tongues?

Scripture affirms not everyone will speak in tongues

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (*1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 28-30*).

Keeping the Faith

There are two main reasons why people leave the faith

- Ignorance: They don't really know what the Church teaches and why
- Disobedience: They don't really care to know what the Church teaches and why

Keeping the Faith

Bringing back one who has left

- Speak charitably (if you cannot it is better not to speak!)
- Ask what the problem is, stop talking, and listen carefully!
- Correct false beliefs as best you can – if you don't know the answer to a question admit it, go and find the answer and get back to him
- Share your love of God and the Church (especially of the Holy Eucharist)
- Fast and pray for him

Keeping Our Children Catholic

Are you living out your Confirmation daily?

- Children whose parents are regular churchgoers are far more likely to be regular churchgoers themselves when they grow up
- The influence of fathers on their children's future faith practice is particularly important

Keeping Our Children Catholic

Are you living out your Confirmation daily?

- Do you attend Mass and Confession regularly?
- Are the teachings of the Church important to you?
- Do you pick and choose what to believe?
- Do you build up the Church in your home or tear it down?
- Is it important to you that your children remain Catholic?
- Do your children see you pray?

Creating a “Catholic” Home

- Attend Mass regularly and Confession once a month
- Pray together as a family – especially the Rosary
- Read the Bible
- Learn your faith
- Display devotional art – especially the Crucifix
- Openly practice forgiveness of others
- Openly practice charity towards others