

CATECHESIS SERIES

(An Education in the Catholic Faith)

FEATURING CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,
THE HOLY BIBLE AND DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS.

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

One way of coming to the living stone, Jesus Christ, is through the sacraments. The sacraments are simply channels through which the grace of God, flowing from the cross of Jesus, comes to us. We must participate in the sacraments not merely externally, but with real faith and expectancy that God himself is present there and wishes to act in our lives through them. The grace of Christ is not limited to the sacraments, but the sacraments make it available to us in a unique and reliable way. The sacraments, then, are an abundant source of God's grace for all those who come to them with faith, desiring to grow closer to God through Jesus Christ. Catholic Christians believe that the grace of Jesus Christ is present in the sacraments because the Bible, the activity of the apostles, and the tradition of the early Church all testify to this belief.¹

Confirmation – General Information

Confirmation is the official prayer of the Church for the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of a baptized Christian.

The Holy Spirit first comes to a person in baptism (Acts 2:38), but the Acts of the Apostles also speak of a prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the outward sign of a “laying on of hands.” Peter

and John were sent to converts in Samaria “and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:15-17). Later in Acts, Paul baptized some disciples in the name of the Lord Jesus, and then, “... when Paul laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

The early Church came to recognize that there was a prayer for the sending of the Holy Spirit that was distinct from baptism. Christians often received the full “release” or outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the prayer and “laying on of hands” of the apostles or one of their successors. Later, an anointing with oil was also added to the sacrament. This is the way the sacrament of confirmation originated. The work of the Holy Spirit was “confirmed” and strengthened in the life of the baptized Christian.

Catholics believe and have witnessed that God desires to send the fullness of his Holy Spirit through confirmation, and that the manifestation and gifts of the Holy Spirit will be evident when this sacrament is approached with expectant faith and prayer.²

Confirmation – Catechism of the Catholic Church

1285 *Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian initiation," whose unity must be*

safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that 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."

1288 *"From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church."*


1302 *It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.*

1310 *To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.*

1319 *A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason must profess the faith, be in the*

state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.

Confirmation in the Sacred Scriptures

Acts 2:1-4 – HEN the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (RSV)

Acts 8:14-17 – 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; 16 for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (RSV)

Acts 19:1-7 – 19 While Apol'los was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he

said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve of them in all. (RSV)

Heb. 6:1-2 - **T**HEREFORE let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (RSV)

Catechesis Questions

1. **Read John 1:17.** The sacraments are channels through which the grace of God, flowing from the cross of Jesus, comes to us. True or False

¹⁷ *For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* (Jn. 1:17) (DOUAY-RHEIMS)

2. **Read CCC 1996.** Grace is *favor, the free and undeserved help* that God gives us. True or False

3. **Read Acts 2:1-4.** The first confirmation when the Holy Spirit “confirmed” and strengthened the life of the baptized Christians was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It was accompanied with a *outward sign* of tongues of fire. True or False

¹ And when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place:

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³ And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them:

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. (Acts 2:1-4) ^(DOUAY-RHEIMS)

4. **Read Acts 8:14-17.** Through the “laying on of hands” of the Apostles (or their representatives) the Holy Spirit was imparted through prayer. True or False

¹⁴ Now when the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.

¹⁵ Who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

¹⁶ For he was not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁷ Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8:14-17) ^(DOUAY-RHEIMS)

5. **Read Acts 19:1-7.** The Apostle Paul confirmed a dozen newly baptized followers by the laying on of hands. True or False

¹ *And it came to pass, while Apollo was at Corinth, that Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples.*

² *And he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost.*

³ *And he said: In what then were you baptized? Who said: In John's baptism.*

⁴ *Then Paul said: John baptized the people with the baptism of penance, saying: That they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus.*

⁵ *Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

⁶ *And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*

⁷ *And all the men were about twelve. (Acts 19:1-7) (DOUAY-RHEIMS)*

6. Read Hebrews 6:1-2; Mark 16:15-18. The laying on of hands to impart blessings and the Holy Spirit is a teaching and doctrine of Jesus Christ.
True or False.

¹ *Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation of penance from dead works, and of faith towards God,*

² *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and imposition of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (Heb. 6:1-2) (DOUAY-RHEIMS)*

¹⁵ *And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

¹⁶ *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.*

¹⁷ *And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues.*

¹⁸ *They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.* (Mark 16:15-18) (DOUAY-RHEIMS)

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