

## Introduction

Our Lord Jesus Christ carried out his earthly mission in communion with the Holy Spirit. He promised the outpouring of the Spirit among his people and this was most dramatically visited upon the apostles as the quotation from Scripture recounts. Through the sacrament of Confirmation, the bishop (as a successor of the apostles) invokes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those to be confirmed.

Confirmation is necessary for the completion of the grace received in Baptism. We are said to become full members of the Church at Confirmation because we are strengthened with grace and anchored more firmly to Christ. The intimate connection between Baptism and Confirmation is still most vividly expressed in the Eastern Churches where both sacraments are conferred on the same occasion. The fact that children in our parish receive Confirmation during their final year of primary school should not diminish our understanding of the link with Baptism.

"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."

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1285]

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by anointing the candidate's forehead with the oil of chrism. The bishop performs this rite by the laying on of the hand accompanied by the words, "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit". The anointing with oil is a sign of consecration and the lives of the newly confirmed should give off "the aroma of Christ".

The person receiving the sacrament is "marked", that is to say he is sealed with the Holy Spirit. This signifies that we belong more perfectly to Christ. We are enrolled in his service and our lives should bear witness to this.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed upon the candidates at Confirmation when the bishop extends his hands over them and invokes the outpouring of the Spirit. There are seven gifts:

- Wisdom
- Understanding
- Right judgement
- Courage
- Knowledge
- Reverence
- Wonder and awe in God's presence

The link with Baptism is evident in the renewal of the baptismal promises by the candidates and the profession of faith made by them. The spiritual help of a sponsor is important for the recipient of the sacrament and such a person should be one of the godparents.

As with Baptism, the sacrament of Confirmation leaves a spiritual mark or indelible character on the soul of the candidate. For this reason a person may only receive the sacrament once in his lifetime.

Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1316]