

Order of Confirmation

The Sacraments of Initiation and the journey to Christian maturity.

Nihil Obstat

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HOW CANDIDATES UNDERSTAND THE LESSON

Confirmation candidates at this age should know that the laying on of hands in the Sacrament of Confirmation is a sign passed down from the Apostles, and it is not just symbolic. The Holy Spirit actually comes down upon those who are confirmed, sealing them with the Gift of the Spirit.

Going Forward While some candidates and their families might see Confirmation as a completion of formation in the faith, it is important to emphasize that they are making an intentional decision to go forward in their faith—to continue to grow toward Christian maturity.

Need for Precision In the Order of Confirmation, the laying on of hands is sometimes confused with the laying on of hand when the anointing with Sacred Chrism occurs. In the laying on of hands, the bishop extends his hands as he asks for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Soon after, the bishop anoints each candidate with Chrism as he says the essential formula.

Confirmation Preparation

Reflection for Catechists

Too often, people see the celebration of Confirmation as an ending rather than a beginning. In our culture, the Sacrament of Confirmation has sometimes been regarded as “graduation” from formation in the faith. On the contrary, as a Sacrament of Initiation, Confirmation is a start of a lifelong journey. It completes our initiation into the Church, but Confirmation begins our walk toward Christian maturity.

In Baptism, we have been joined to Jesus’ Paschal Mystery. Just as he died, we die to sin. Just as Jesus was resurrected, we have been raised to new life. Confirmation completes our Baptism, and seals us with the Gift of the Holy Spirit. We have been anointed—to serve, to spread the Good News, and to live as sons and daughters of God.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 19, Saint Paul encounters people who had been baptized but had not yet received the Holy Spirit. He lays his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. We continue this tradition of the laying on of hands, and we go forth, sealed with the Holy Spirit.

- What do I remember about my Confirmation?
- How have I continued to grow in my faith following my initiation into the Church?

Scripture Background



In the Book of Acts, Chapter 2, a mighty wind roars and tongues of fire descend on the heads of Jesus’ Apostles. The Apostles are emboldened by the Holy Spirit and speak to the crowds who have gathered for the Jewish Feast of Weeks. As Saint Peter begins to speak, everyone present hears him in his or her own language, despite the fact that people had gathered from many nations. Peter offers three pieces of evidence that Jesus was the Son of God—the first being prophecy from Scripture, the second being the miracles and signs Jesus worked, and the third being what the crowd was experiencing in that moment. Peter calls the crowd to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and says they too will receive the Holy Spirit. More than two thousand people are baptized that day.

In this Scripture, we can clearly see the Holy Spirit’s role in making the truth known about Jesus Christ and leading others to him. The explosive growth of the Church on the day of Pentecost and in the subsequent years is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit, who gave those early Christians the strength and courage to hand on the faith in a time of tremendous persecution.

Objectives

- To reflect on the gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit and how they can be a light in our lives
- To introduce the key themes of the unit and to reflect on what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit



Let Us Pray

Invite the candidates to gather in the prayer space.

- Begin by praying the Sign of the Cross.
- Pray together the short prayer under Let Us Pray.
- Direct the young people to take their seats for the Scripture reflection.



Scripture

Guide the group through a reflection on the verse from the Gospel according to Luke. You may wish to play instrumental music during the reflection.

- Invite the candidates to be still and close their eyes. Encourage them to open their minds and hearts to what God is saying to them.
- Proclaim the Scripture from Luke 11:33–36 as the young people listen.
- Allow for several minutes of silent reflection.
- *Ask:* What did you hear God say to you today?
- Call on volunteers to respond.

Have you ever thought . . .

Have the candidates reflect on special talents or gifts God has given them, such as in music, math, athletics, or even social gifts, such as the ability to make friends easily or to feel empathy for others.

Ask: What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you? Which of these do you sometimes keep hidden?

Have volunteers respond to the questions in the text.

Getting Started

Use page 28 to introduce the candidates to the key themes of this unit.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud both Getting Started paragraphs.

- *Ask:* Have you ever felt anxious or afraid about a particular situation, but then unexpectedly found the strength you needed to face it?
- Invite several volunteers to respond.
- Share that this is similar to the Apostles' experience, which the group will read about later in the unit.

ACTIVITY

Sealed with the Holy Spirit

Read aloud the activity directions.

- Explain to the candidates that, like the Apostles who were anointed with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they will be anointed with the Holy Spirit at Confirmation.
- Invite the candidates to design their seals. Because this activity requires some abstract thinking, you may wish to brainstorm with the young people for words and symbols to represent the seal of the Holy Spirit.
- Call on volunteers to show and explain their seals to the class.

Catechist Background

Anointing with Sacred Chrism and the Seal of the Holy Spirit In the Order of Confirmation, anointing with Sacred Chrism signifies and imprints a spiritual seal. Here is how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains it:

"By this anointing the confirmand receives the 'mark,' the seal of the Holy Spirit. A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object (Cf. Gen 38:18; 41:42; Deut 32:34; CT 8:6). . . . A seal authenticates a juridical act or document and occasionally makes it secret (Cf. 1 Kings 21:8; Jer 32:10; Isa 29:11).

"Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal (Cf. Jn 6:27). Christians are also marked with a seal: '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' (2 Cor 1:21–22; cf. Eph 1:13; 4, 30). This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial" (Cf. Rev 7:2–3; 9:4; Ezek 9:4–6) (CCC, 1294–1296).

Symbol of Our Faith —Sacred Chrism

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the text about Sacred Chrism.

- Read aloud the definition of *Sacred Chrism* on page 29.
- Point out that in Biblical and other ancient symbolism, anointing also symbolizes abundance and joy; it cleanses (as in the anointing after a bath) and limbers (as in the anointing of athletes). Anointing with oil is also a sign of healing, since it soothes wounds.
- Call on volunteers to tell how each of these symbols reflects the spiritual meaning of anointing with Sacred Chrism in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Encounter with Christ

Invite a volunteer to read aloud “Encounter with Christ.”

- *Ask:* What does it mean to say we are “buried in the waters of baptism?”
- Call on volunteers to respond. Help the young people understand that at Baptism our “old selves” die and we are reborn as children of God.

Optional Activity

Use this activity to reinforce the candidates’ understanding of the Paschal Mystery.

- Organize the candidates into four groups.
- Distribute poster board (one sheet per group), art supplies, and Bibles (at least one per group).
- Assign each group one aspect of Christ’s work of salvation through the Paschal Mystery—his Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.
- Have the members of each group work together to design a poster that represents their subject in words and images. Encourage the young people to include a Scripture quote in their posters.
- Invite the groups to take turns presenting their posters.
- Display the posters around the room.

Objectives

- Read the Scriptural account of Pentecost
- Imagine and reflect on the experience of being present at Pentecost
- Learn about the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation and the Laying on of Hands

Sharing the Holy Spirit

Have a volunteer read the two paragraphs under Sharing the Holy Spirit on page 30.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Scripture from Acts of the Apostles.

- Lead a discussion of the Scripture, using the following questions:
 - “What were the visible signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence at Pentecost?” (Noise, wind, tongues of fire)
 - “What were the visible effects of the Holy Spirit’s descent on the Apostles?” (Speaking in tongues; all in the crowd understanding them regardless of their language)
 - “What was the effect on those in the crowd?” (Many accepted the Good News and nearly three thousand were baptized that day)
 - Share with the candidates more about the Holy Spirit from the Catechist Background feature below.

ACTIVITY

Imagine

Have candidates silently read the instructions.

- Invite the young people to write responses.
- Call on volunteers to share what they have written.

Catechist Background

Throughout the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit plays an important role in God’s work of salvation. In the Book of Exodus, we see the Holy Spirit at work in the Israelite’s exodus out of Egypt, when God guides them through the desert with a column of clouds and a column of fire (see Exodus 13:21). Other Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit are associated with the prophets, who deliver God’s message when the “spirit of God” comes upon them (see 2 Chronicles 15:1). The Holy Spirit’s greatest participation in God’s work of salvation can be witnessed in the New Testament. To realize the Incarnation, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived Jesus, our Savior.

The Sacraments of Initiation

Have the candidates silently read the text on page 31.

- *Ask:* Why do we call Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist the Sacraments of Christian Initiation? (Because through them we become full members—are fully initiated into—the Church)
- Share with the candidates that in the early Church, Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated together, in the same liturgy, but over time the two Sacraments came to be celebrated separately, with Baptism taking place in infancy and Confirmation following, sometimes years later, after the celebration of First Eucharist. Explain that in some dioceses there has been a move to return to what is known as the “restored order” for celebrating the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, in which Confirmation is celebrated closer to the time of Baptism, before First Eucharist.

Celebrating the Sacrament

Read aloud the paragraph about the Laying on of Hands.

- Explain that we use the term “laying on of hands” when bishops and priests are extending their hands over a person/ or a group of people being blessed or prayed over. In the celebration of Confirmation, the Laying on of Hands occurs as the bishop calls upon the Father to send his Holy Spirit upon those to be confirmed, bestowing upon them his seven Gifts.

Reinforce the candidates’ learning, if time allows, about the Sacraments of Christian Initiation with the following optional activity.

Optional Activity

- Organize the young people into small groups.
- Distribute three sheets of drawing paper, colored paper, and scissors to each group. (You may also wish to provide these optional mobile-making supplies to each group: wire hanger, three 18-inch pieces of yarn, hole-punch.)
- Explain that each group is to design a logo or symbol for each of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Encourage the candidates to be creative but to also reflect facts about the Sacraments.
- Invite the groups to take turns presenting their logos or designs.
- Consider, if time allows, having the young people make mobiles out of their logos for displaying in the classroom.

Objective

- Explore the essential elements, the preparation, the minister, and the requirements for the Sacrament of Confirmation

Frequently Asked Questions about Confirmation

Call on volunteers to read aloud each question and answer on page 32.

- Pause after each question and answer to review what has been read and reinforce key points or clarify any points that are misunderstood.
- Use the following or similar questions to review what has been read:
 - “What age is usually considered the ‘age of discretion’?” (Seven)
 - “Although the bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, when is the parish priest the typical minister of the Sacrament?” (At the Easter Vigil, for people becoming Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)
 - “What are the essential elements of the Order of Confirmation?” (Anointing with Sacred Chrism along with the formula to be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.)

Go to the Source

Organize the young people into small groups.

- Distribute Bibles (one per group).
- Have the groups read Acts 8:14–17 and discuss what the passage means and how it is connected to the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Invite a spokesperson from each group to share their group’s understanding of the passage as it relates to Confirmation.

ACTIVITY

Traditions of Confirmation

Distribute copies of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or provide access to the resource via the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

- Organize the candidates into groups of three or four.
- Have the young people read paragraphs 1290 to 1292 of the *Catechism* and respond to the Describe questions on page 33 of their texts.

Laying on of Hands

Invite volunteers to read aloud the text on the Laying on of Hands.

- Remind the candidates of the passages from Chapter 8 of Acts of the Apostles they read earlier, in which the Apostles laid hands on those who had already been baptized.
- Explain that the Laying on of Hands with the prayer for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is different than the next part of the Sacrament, when the minister anoints with Sacred Chrism by laying on the hand and praying for each candidate to be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit. This anointing by laying on the hand is also an essential part of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders. It is the same gesture in the Anointing of the Sick, but a different holy oil is used (the Oil of the Sick).

Give the candidates time to reflect on the questions at the bottom of the page: What will it mean to you to be a son or daughter of God? How will you use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Optional Activity

If time allows, extend the learning on traditions of Confirmation using the following activity. The activity will require Internet access or resources on the Eastern Catholic Churches.

Organize the candidates in pairs or small groups.

- Distribute resources (if using). Direct the pairs or groups to conduct research to learn about the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in the Eastern Catholic Churches.
- Explain that the Roman Catholic Church is made up of twenty-two Churches in all: the Latin Church and twenty-one Eastern Catholic Churches. Instruct the candidates to write an eyewitness report describing reception of the Sacraments in an Eastern Catholic Church.
- Have them write their reports as journalists on the scene, relaying all the details that can help others learn about the celebration of the Sacraments.

Objectives

- Learn about the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they strengthen us to live as Jesus' disciples
- Reflect on preparation for Confirmation and the choice of a sponsor
- Explore the life of Saint Gemma Galgani
- Consider ways to live out what has been learned

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Review the definition of *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* on page 29.

- Read the first paragraph on page 34, then call on volunteers to take turns reading each of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit as described by Pope Francis.
- Point out that the descriptions of the gifts come from the words of Pope Francis in talks he gave during his General Audiences in spring 2014.
- Strengthen the group's understanding of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit using the following or similar questions.
 - Which gift, in particular, was evident in Saint Stephen at the time of his martyrdom? (Fortitude)
 - Which gift especially helps us accept God's will when it differs from our personal desires? (Wisdom)
 - Which gift helps us worship God through the liturgy and Sacraments and in our prayers? (Piety or Reverence)
 - Which gifts help you recognize God's greatness? (Knowledge and Fear of the Lord or Wonder and Awe)
- Engage the candidates in a discussion about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Discuss some challenging situations they may encounter and how the Gifts of the Holy Spirit can help them in those circumstances.

ACTIVITY

From Head to Heart

Invite the candidates to write their responses to the Connect: Head to Heart questions on page 35.

- Call on volunteers to share their responses.
- Use this time to make sure the candidates have spent the appropriate amount of time preparing for Confirmation with their sponsors.

ACTIVITY

Listening with Our Hearts

Read aloud the opening paragraph of the Create section on the bottom of page 35.

- Read the first question and give some moments for reflection. Then ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.
- Direct the candidates to take a few minutes to create an image that expresses how they felt when they were closest to God.

Catechist Reflection

“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). These words, spoken by Jesus to a religious leader named Nicodemus, sum up the way the Holy Spirit works.

- What are some times in your life when you experienced the Holy Spirit at work in your life, leading you on a path you had not planned for or expected?
- How did this lead to a positive outcome for yourself or others?
- How can you be more open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Optional Activity

This optional activity will allow the candidates to reflect on keeping their baptismal promises even when it means standing apart from peers and friends.

Share with the young people the words of the following old American Spiritual, called “The Lonesome Valley.” Then invite them to write a third stanza—in first person—about a personal experience of the “lonesome valley.”

*Jesus walked that lonesome valley.
He had to walk it by himself.
Nobody else could walk it for him.
He had to walk it by himself.*

*You must walk that lonesome valley.
You’ve got to walk that lonesome valley.
Nobody else can walk it for you.
You’ve got to walk it by yourself.*

Saint Gemma Galgani

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the text on page 36 about Saint Gemma Galgani.

- Ask the following or similar questions:
 - “What are some challenges Saint Gemma faced during her lifetime?”
 - “How did these challenges affect her faith?”
 - “What can you learn from Saint Gemma’s example?”
- Share with the young people that although Saint Gemma’s life and experience may seem remote to the modern world, her example of faithfulness to and love for God is timeless. The circumstances and challenges may change, but love for God should always guide our lives and the choices we make.

Take the Message Home

Read aloud the text.

- **Ask:** How will you witness to your faith this week?
- Have the candidates take turns naming one way mentioned in the text or another idea for ways to witness to the faith that they will put into action this week.
- Encourage the young people to follow through on the actions they have identified. Members of the group may wish to revisit this question on their own in the coming week to see how they are doing in putting their plans into action.

Prepare for Prayer

Ask the candidates if there are any questions about any of the content they learned in Unit 3.

- Have the candidates write on a piece of paper their answer to the following question: “What part of this unit did you find most helpful in strengthening your faith and why?”
- Have them save the slip of paper for the Unit Prayer coming up.



Unit Prayer

Gather around a prayer table, or in another sacred space, with a Bible, a candle, and a bowl of holy water.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Catechist: We have looked back at the beginning of our Church on the Day of Pentecost when the number of people entering the Body of Christ grew daily. We discussed how the Sacrament of Confirmation is the beginning of our full initiation into the Church. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Please take out your slips of paper and read what you found most important from this unit.

[Individually, each candidate reads what he or she wrote and why.]

Catechist: Dear Father, we thank you for giving us knowledge about yourself and making us aware of our purpose in the world you created. Help us to always follow in the footsteps of your Son with the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. Together, let us pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:
Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to choose what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.