

CONFIRMATION

Diocese of Helena Parent/Sponsor
Resource on the Sacrament of Confirmation



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Introduction

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Resource on the Sacrament of Confirmation



Gifts of the Spirit

REVERENCE
AWE
WISDOM
COURAGE
RIGHT JUDGMENT
UNDERSTANDING
KNOWLEDGE



A Resource for Parents & Sponsors

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of initiation,” whose unity must be affirmed. 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.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1285.)

The goals of Confirmation preparation are:

- To provide catechesis based on the above understanding of Confirmation, and also an understanding of the Confirmation Rite and its symbols.
- To provide a positive experience of the parish community for the candidates and their families.
- To provide teaching and witness by lay catechists on the duties and responsibilities of fully initiated Catholics.
- To connect the candidate with the parish community by explaining and inviting participation in liturgical worship and ongoing parish services and activities.
- To provide parents/guardians and/or sponsors with an updated understanding of Confirmation through the preparation process.



Dear Parents and Sponsors,

With joy and hope, I present this resource to you as your son or daughter begins preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The celebration with our young women and men fills their lives with the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit as they complete the Sacraments of Initiation. Yet at the same time we must acknowledge that this is really the continuation of a life-long journey of faith, discipleship, and belonging to the community of the Church. On that first Pentecost the Apostles received the fulfillment of our Lord's promise to be with them always and to strengthen them for the task of evangelization. Our young men and women must deepen their personal encounter with Christ through a life of prayer (centered on the Eucharist), a life committed to the moral values of the Gospel, a love for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and a life of service, especially to the poor and needy.

Parents and sponsors have a unique role not only in this preparation, but in supporting the young person throughout their journey of faith. This is part of the responsibility one assumed in celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism and First Eucharist. Your personal faith journey and the example of a Gospel-centered life serve as an important witness to our youth. I particularly encourage you to assist your child's journey by your prayers and your continued commitment to the weekly parish celebration of Eucharist.

I look forward to celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation with our young people and with you, their parents and sponsors.



Most Rev. George Leo Thomas

Bishop of Helena



Parents & Sponsors Read This!

The times of sacramental preparation are usually “teachable moments” for parents as well as for their children. They are opportune times to update parents concerning the Church’s teaching about the sacraments. The reason for the resource is to aid parents in developing an adult understanding of the place of sacraments in their lives, and hopefully, this will encourage more frequent reception on the part of those who may not have been connected with the Church.

Historical Overview and Development

In the Western Church the understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation today includes different aspects, which developed during the ages:

- Confirmation is the fulfillment of Baptism – it is one of the sacraments by which a person is initiated into the Church.
- Confirmation enables one to grow in faith and affirm their personal relationship with Christ.
- Confirmation strengthens one to accept the mission of Jesus and the Church as one’s own mission.

Tracing the historical development of the sacrament, and looking at its meaning during different times in the Church can help us to see how these three understandings developed.

The Early Church – The First 300 Years

In the Early Church, one Rite existed by which a person was initiated into the Church. This Rite included what we consider to be the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

- Clothing with a white garment
- Laying on of hands
- Calling down of the Holy Spirit
- Reception of Eucharist
- Reception occurred at Easter Vigil Service.

Parents/Sponsors...please use this resource!

The resource for catechesis of parents and/or sponsors is divided into several parts accompanied by sample questions. You are invited to develop other questions. The doctrinal elements are referenced to the Catechism of the Catholic Church; the paragraph numbers are noted in parentheses.

Reception occurred in that order in the ceremony. The Presider was the Bishop and the Rite included:

- Profession of faith
- Immersion in water
- Anointing with oil

Preparation took two to three years, and this is the basis of today’s RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

Reason for having such an extended process, was that the community wanted to be sure the person was:

- Sincere in their conversion to Jesus.
- Serious about their commitment to follow Jesus, despite the possibility of being put to death.

Practical reasons also existed. The Church was under persecution and thus was in hiding as an underground Church and wanted to be sure the person was not there to turn them into authorities.

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A History Continued...

The 4th Century

Early 4th century Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the empire. As a result: Persecutions began to dwindle.

The number of persons wanting to become Christians increased. The practice of initiating whole families and young children and infants became widespread.

The Bishop was unable to preside over every ceremony, thus the ceremony was broken up and Confirmation celebrated at a different time.

By the 5th Century

Infant baptism became the norm, with the reception of Eucharist following immediately.

The Bishop later presided over the rite which included:

- Laying on of hands.
- Anointing with oil.

This resulted in the order of reception being Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

1200-4th Lateran Council (1215 AD)

The order remained this way (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation) until during the 4th Lateran Council when the age of receiving First Eucharist was moved to between 7-15 years old.

This restored the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation to their original order of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.



Council of Trent (1545-1563) to 19th Century

In reaction to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of Trent affirmed Confirmation as a sacrament.

Confirmation took on the meaning that it strengthened one to defend the Catholic Faith – a “Soldier of Christ.”

Theologians began to see the Rites of Initiation as three separate sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Prior to the Council of Trent Confirmation was viewed as one of the sacraments of initiation, but this understanding

was stressed less afterwards.

18th – 19th Centuries

Confirmation was delayed until after reception of First Eucharist.

This resulted in more emphasis being placed upon the need to understand the truths of

the Catholic Faith before being confirmed.

Thus, Confirmation was more readily understood as a sacrament in which one accepts and takes on the responsibility of living out the mission of Jesus and the Church, to spread the Good News of God’s Kingdom.

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Today: A Modern Understanding

All three understandings are present in the way the Church views Confirmation.

- Confirmation is the fulfillment of Baptism – one of the sacraments by which a person is initiated into the Church.
- Confirmation enables one to live their faith peacefully in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Confirmation strengthens one to accept the mission of Jesus and the Church, to spread the Good News of the Kingdom, as one's own mission.

Read: CCC, page 325-326, #1285

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the “sacraments of Christian initiation,” whose unity must be affirmed. 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 affirm the faith by word and deed.

The Rite of Confirmation today looks back to the earliest understanding of its connection with the other two sacraments of initiation:

- Confirmation is celebrated within the Eucharist.
- The candidate renews baptismal promises and receives Eucharist.
- The RCIA process restores the original order of reception and the understanding that the three sacraments are the means of initiation into the Catholic Church.

Questions for Discussion

Think about and discuss each one of these meanings of the Sacrament of Confirmation and how it connects to your life and affects what you do in your everyday life.

Confirmation is the fulfillment of Baptism – one of the sacraments through which a person is initiated into the Christian Community - the Church. What does initiation mean to you, that through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist you became a full member of the Catholic Church?

Confirmation enables one to live the Catholic faith in today's world. What are some of the areas in which you need help from the Holy Spirit to live a better life as a follower of Jesus - at home, at work, in the world today?

Confirmation strengthens one to accept the mission of Christ and the Catholic Church as one's own, and to participate in that mission. The mission of Jesus and the Church is to spread the Good News of God's Kingdom. What are some of the ways you do this? Be specific and practical.

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Signs/Symbols of the Rite of Confirmation

The following is a more in depth look at the signs and symbols of the actual Rite of Confirmation

Looking at the Rite of Confirmation will help us to understand the meaning of Confirmation:

Read: CCC, page 328, #1295, 1296

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. Hence soldiers were marked with their leader’s seal and slaves with their master’s. Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father’s seal. 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.” This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service forever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.

The Effects of Confirmation

With Confirmation we receive the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the apostles received on Pentecost.

Read: CCC, page 330, #1302, 1303

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.

From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba, Father!”
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and affirm the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

Questions for Discussion:

Which of the above effects of Confirmation do you most need in your life today? Why?

Why do you want your son or daughter to be confirmed?

actions
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1. Renewal of Baptismal Promises: This shows that Confirmation follows and is connected with Baptism

2. Laying on of hands: Since the earliest biblical times, this action has signified the calling down of God’s Spirit, and during the time of

the Early Church the Holy Spirit.
3. Anointing: Oil has always been a sign of abundance, joy, richness, healing, soothing, radiance.

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The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In the Sacrament of Confirmation we recognize that the Holy Spirit has a special role.

In Confirmation the Holy Spirit touches the lives of those confirmed through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

During the Rite of Confirmation, in the laying on of hands, the Bishop prays for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon those about to be confirmed as he says:

Read Rites
p. 318-319 # 41, 42

*My dear friends:
In baptism God our Father gave the new birth of eternal life to his chosen sons and daughters.
Let us pray to the Father that he will pour out the Holy Spirit to strengthen his sons and daughters with his gifts and anoint them to be more like Christ the Son of God.*

*After silent prayer he continues with outstretched hands:
All-powerful God,
Father of our Lord*

Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and

courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Thus we can see how important the Gifts are to Confirmation.



The Gifts in Scripture

Many passages in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures deal with the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts of the Apostles 2:1-4

Here we find: A description of the first Pentecost. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. A change in the apostles so that they are now able to:

- Reach out to others.
- Tell the Good News of Christ.
- Go forth to build up the Church, the Body of Christ.

This was possible then and continues to be possible today, because in Confirmation the Holy Spirit bestows on each person what we call the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Read: Isaiah 11: 1-10

If we believe that a person receives a strengthening of the Holy Spirit and these Gifts with Confirmation, it is important to examine them, to see what they mean in the life of an individual, to see the impact they have on the person and the community.

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The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in detail

Some of the words used to describe the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1830-1831) were used differently during the time of the Old and New Testaments than they are today. Therefore, it is important to understand their meaning in the historical context to have a correct understanding of them for our lives today.

WISDOM

- An openness that allows a person to recognize his or her potential, limits, and then to act accordingly – “to know oneself.”
- A combination of a person’s experience in the world and his or her reflection upon it.
- The realization that one must rely upon God for a vision or way of looking at life and the world, because of our human limitation.
- Seeing life from God’s viewpoint

UNDERSTANDING

- Gift that enables a person of faith to delve deeper into what God’s revelation means for his or her life
- Enables an ever maturing faith so that God’s presence becomes more discernible in every day life
- A person gains deeper insight through faith, they “see with the eyes of faith.”
- Gives our life meaning. We recognize what God’s viewpoint means for us.

COUNSEL – RIGHT JUDGEMENT

- Aids a person in decision-making – decisions still are the individual’s to make
- God provides direction, help, by speaking to us through creation, scripture, and other people to act justly
- A person with the help of this Gift must choose to judge rightly
- Decision-making

FORTITUDE – COURAGE

- Used in the biblical sense – the willingness to leave behind the narrow confines of self and commit oneself to the infinite, by responding to God’s call to have faith in God.
- Examples – Abraham, Joseph, Peter and other disciples
- Affects the way a person lives and faces life, so it is done “firmly by faith instead of by fear.”
- Enables a person to profess faith in action, and not only word, despite difficulties, disappointments, suffering, lack of full understanding.
- Faith in action.

KNOWLEDGE

- Meaning of the word is different from its use today.
- NOT knowledge of the mind, NOT an intellectual understanding of facts about God or our faith.
- Knowledge of the HEART – response of the whole person to God’s love – God’s call – God’s choice.

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The Gifts of the Holy Spirit continued...

KNOWLEDGE Continued...

- An intimate relationship with God and an experience of God that touches and affects the whole person and all that one does.
- OT connotation - an intimacy as deep as that between husband and wife in the act of sexual union.
- To know God personally, to acknowledge God as God, to respond in love to others with justice and service.
- Response.

PEITY – REVERENCE

- Refers to the love a person has for God as reflected in the reverence one has for God.
- Results in:
 - Participation in worship of God because of love and not obligation.
 - Concern for others because of God's love for them, and because God's holiness is reflected in them – God created all people.
 - Participation!

FEAR OF THE LORD – WONDER AND AWE

- OT connotation of fear – to owe allegiance to someone, not for negative reasons but positive ones – out of awe for that person.
- Recognition of the majesty of God and our dependence upon God.

- Fear – positive fear - of hurting our relationship with God, fear of doing anything to separate us from God, our loving Father.
- We “fear” to hurt the ones we love.
- Obedience/love/wonder/awe

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit...

- **Build upon faith-relationship a person already has with God.**
- **Are drawn upon throughout one's life.**
- **Help each person to recognize existing talents and to develop them for the good of the community, thus building up the Church – the Body of Christ.**
- **The confirmed Christian draws upon the Gifts in whatever life situation one finds oneself.**
- **KEY: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit enables one to live and act for others, to take on the mission of Jesus and the Church of spreading the Good News – all by using the special gifts and talents one has.**

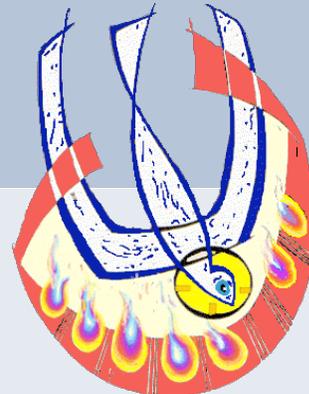
Questions for Discussion:

How do you see the Gifts of the Holy Spirit working in your life?

Which Gift of the Holy Spirit do you think you need the most in your life today?

Which Gift of the Holy Spirit do you think your child needs the most in his or her life today?

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Resources

The Diocesan Resource Center offers a variety of materials suitable for use in Confirmation catechesis. The materials listed below are approved and recommended by the Diocese of Helena. Other materials approved by the pastor or pastoral administrator may also be used if they have been referred to the Office of Catholic Formation Services for review and approval prior to their use. For more information, call 1-800-584-8914 or 442-5820.

Anointed in the Spirit – A High School Confirmation Program from Saint Mary's Press S/P & TM/CM ©2011

Be Sealed from Pauline Books and Media S/P&TM ©1998

Call to Celebrate: Confirmation (Older Adolescents) from Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM/CM ©2008

Celebrating Our Faith: Confirmation from Harcourt (OSV Curriculum) S/P&TM ©2000

Christ Our Life: Confirmed in the Spirit from Loyola Press S/P&TM ©1997

Confirmation from RCL Benziger S/P&TM/CM ©2007

Confirmation, Inspired by the Spirit from William H. Sadlier, Inc. S © 2012

Confirmation: Receiving the Gift of the Spirit (9-12) from Pflaum Publishing Group S/P&TM/CM ©2010

Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidate's Handbook from Saint Mary's Press S/P ©2006

Image of God (Mass Books and Confirmation) from Ignatius Press S/P&TM ©1986-1993

The Sacrament of Confirmation from New Hope Publications S/P ©2011, 2012

Send Out Your Spirit: A Confirmation from Ave Maria Press S/P&TM ©2003, 2010

Please note the listed resources have been produced primarily for use with adolescents preparing to celebrate Confirmation. Some portions or the general approach thereof may be used with adults as well, given the relative lack of materials produced specifically for adult confirmation preparation. Contact the Resource Center for additional suggestions.

More Information:

Visit the www.usccb.org site for more information on approved catechetical text for faith formation. Visit <http://bit.ly/JZtFTb> for the complete list of approved text in pdf format. For more information on Confirmation resources please contact Kathy Ward in the Diocesan Resource Center at 406-442-5820 or email: kward@diocesehelena.org

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Remedial Instruction

At times students come forward for the Sacrament of Confirmation who have not been attending religious instruction on a regular basis, or who have not attended since they received their First Eucharist.

Since proximate (immediate) preparation for Confirmation focuses on the sacrament, it is important to provide remedial instruction for such students before they enter the Confirmation Program.

The amount and kind of remedial work needed is a pastoral decision based upon previous attendance and what would be best to bring the student up to where his or her classmates are concerning an understanding of the Catholic faith.

Remedial instruction can be done in a variety of ways, depending upon the situation. Where there are several students of a similar age and lack of religious instruction, a remedial class can be created for them. If only one or two students come forward, you may involve the parents in working with the student at home and bringing him or her in for a quarterly evaluation. The resources listed on the previous page can be used in either format, a special class or individual study. Guidance is available from the Office of Catholic Formation Services if there are questions concerning this issue.



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Diocese of Helena

Office of Catholic Formation Services

It is my sincerest hope that the parents and sponsors of our young people preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation will use the material contained here to reflect once more on their own "initiation" into the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

This prayerful reflection should be a source of great joy, as one considers the Paschal Mystery and all that our Lord in His love has done for us. It should serve as a moment of grace and a re-commitment to a life shaped by the values of the Gospel, serving as an example to our young people. Let us continue to pray for those to be confirmed in the Holy Spirit that this occasion will strengthen them for life's faith journey and bring them that joy and peace which the world cannot give—but can only flow from the loving Heart of Christ!

John Fencik
(Director of Catholic Formation Services)