

# CONFIRMATION

St. Mary of Lourdes Parent/Sponsor  
Resource on the Sacrament of Confirmation



St. Mary of Lourdes

## In this Resource:

### HISTORY

A brief history of the Sacrament of  
Confirmation  
p. 4-5

### MODERN UNDERSTANDING

A concise description of the  
current theology of Confirmation  
p. 6-7

### GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

An in depth look at the gifts of the  
Holy Spirit and their central role  
in preparing to receive the  
Sacrament of Confirmation  
p. 8-10



“Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.  
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.  
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.  
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.  
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.”

~ St. Augustine

# Parent/Sponsor Resource

# Introduction

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## Gifts of the Spirit

REVERENCE

AWE  
(Fear of the Lord)

WISDOM

COURAGE  
(Fortitude)

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 ministries and activities.
- To provide parents/guardians and/or sponsors with an updated understanding of Confirmation through the preparation process.

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,  
which parted and came to rest on each one of them  
And they were all filled with the

*Holy Spirit*

Acts 2:4



St. Mary of Lourdes

# A Letter

From the Office of Faith Formation

## Dear Parents and Sponsors,

With joyful hope, I present this resource to you as your son or daughter begins their 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 remember 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 the Lord's promise to be with them always and to strengthen them to spread the Gospel with their lives, to go forth and evangelize. Our young people must deepen their personal relationship with Jesus 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 those in need.

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 young person's journey by your prayers and your continued commitment to the weekly parish celebration of Eucharist.

I am looking forward to journeying with your young person, their sponsor, and your family as they prepare to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and throughout their life-long faith journey.

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**St. Mary of Lourdes**

# Confirmation

## Parent/Sponsor Resource

# 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 teachings about the sacraments. The reason for the resource is to aid parents and sponsors 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.

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

Reasons 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.

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



# Confirmation

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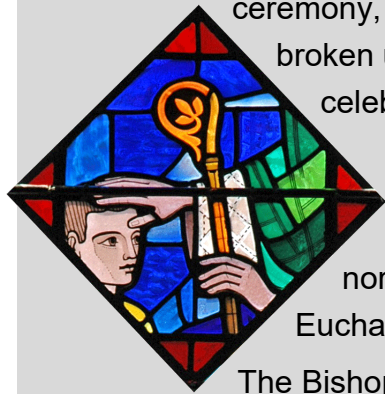
## A History Continued...

### The 4th Century

Early 4th century Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the empire. As a result: Persecution 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 immediately following.

The Bishop later presided over the rite which included:

- Laying on of hand.
- 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 on to defend the Catholic Faith — a “Soldier for 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.

# Confirmation

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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.

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.

**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."*

### 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.

# Confirmation

Parent/Sponsor Resource

## 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 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?

3  
actions

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.

# Confirmation

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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**

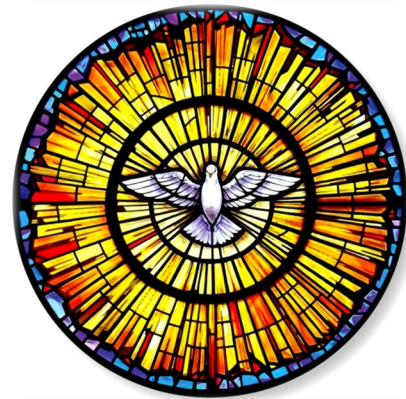
*My dear friends:  
In baptism God our Father gave the new birth of eternal life to his chosen sons and daughters.  
Let us pray to the Father that he will pour out the Holy Spirit to strengthen his sons and daughters with his gifts and anoint them to be more like Christ the Son of God.*

*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.



# Confirmation

## Parent/Sponsor Resource

# 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, 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.

# Confirmation

## Parent/Sponsor Resource

# 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.

### PEIET — 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.