

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

- Baptism Confirmation and the Eucharist constitute sacraments of Christian initiation.
- Confirmation makes us more perfectly bound to the Church by being enriched with the special strength of the Holy Spirit.
- Those confirmed are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the Catholic faith by word and deed even as young people or children.
- In the O.T. the Holy Spirit was only conferred on Kings and prophets
- Christ fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit on Easter Sunday evening and more strikingly at Pentecost.
- The apostles at Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit and about 3000 people received the Holy Spirit on that day.
- The apostles imparted the gift of the Spirit by *'the laying on of hands'*.
- *'Laying on of hands'* by the Bishop is seen by the Catholic Church as the origin of the Sacrament of Confirmation and a perpetuation of Pentecost within the church community throughout the ages.
- Very early on, added to the imposition of hands, was anointing with a perfumed oil (Chrism)

Signs of the Rite of Confirmation

- Anointing is rich in biblical symbolism
- In the psalm 104 is signifies abundance and joy.
- It is a sign of healing in the gospel (Lk 3:4)
- A baby is anointed with the oil of baptism (catechumens) on the breast as a sign of cleansing from original Sin and strengthening.
- The sick are anointed as a sign of healing and comfort.
- Anointing in Confirmation and Ordination is a sign of consecration. Those confirmed share more fully in the mission of Jesus Christ.
- The confirmed also receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. Soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their masters in ancient times. In John's gospel it says that Jesus was marked with his Father's seal. This confirmation seal marks our total belonging to Christ and our enrolment in His service as well as a promise of divine protection.

Celebration of Confirmation

- The celebration of Confirmation begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and profession of faith by those to be confirmed – this shows the connection with baptism.
- The bishop extends his hands over the whole group which is a sign of them receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. While doing this the Bishop says a standard

prayer.

- Then follows the anointing with chrism on the forehead done by the 'laying on of hands' accompanied by the words "be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit".
- The sign of peace given by the bishop demonstrates ecclesial union with the bishop and the rest of the Christ's Faithful.

Effects of Confirmation

- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost
- The Spirit makes us more conscious that God is our loving (Abba) Father
- Increase of the gifts of the spirit in us
- Renders the bond with the Church more perfect
- Gives us strength to spread and defend the faith as true witnesses of Christ and profess our faith more publicly
- Empowers us to be never ashamed of the cross of Christ.

CONFIRMATION IS ONLY CONFERRED ONCE AND IMPRINTS OF THE SOUL AND INDELIBLE SPIRITUAL MARK.

Who can receive the Sacrament?

- Every baptised person without which Christian initiation remains incomplete.
- Sometimes it is called the sacrament of Christian

maturity. However we must not presume that because one is an adult that their faith is more mature than that of a younger person or even a child. *Age of Body does not determine maturity of soul (St Thomas Aquinas).*

- Confirmation draws us closer to Christ and gives us a deeper sense of belonging to the church, particularly the parish community and also a deeper awareness of the Universal Church.
- To receive confirmation one must be in a state of grace.
- One should receive the Sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed of sin especially grave sin.
- There should also be an extra commitment to prayer in the candidate's life.
- The sponsor at baptism is best for confirmation to show more clearly the connection between the two sacraments.

The Minister of Confirmation

- The Bishop is the ordinary minister of confirmation. Bishops are successors of the apostles.
- Someone in danger of death, even new-born babies should be confirmed after they are baptised.