

Opening Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle 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.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sacrament of Baptism

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other Sacraments.” (CCC 1213)

The word “Baptism” means to “plunge” or “immerse.” Immersed into what? The life of the Trinity.

Jesus said to the Pharisee Nicodemus: “*No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit*” (John 3:5). Baptism is new birth by water and the Holy Spirit. A person enters the waters of baptism, dies, and a new, reborn person rises from the water.

Effects of Baptism: An actual cleansing takes place, a washing away of sin and death. As a sacrament, it is **efficacious**. It accomplishes that which it signifies. Baptism washes away **original and personal sin**. What is original sin? We are conceived in a state of original sin. When an adult is baptized, all their personal sins are also wiped away. Baptism is called the **gateway sacrament** because it is how we enter the life of grace and become members of the Church, sharing in the life of the Trinity and can receive the other Sacraments. By Baptism, we are transformed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism places an **indelible spiritual mark** on our soul (called a **character**). A person is baptized only once. Baptism makes us adopted children of God as members of the family of the Trinity. When the Father looks at his Son Jesus, he sees us as a member of his Son’s body, hence we too can call God our Father. If God is our Father, we share a new spiritual kinship with all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Old Testament Prefiguration:

Creation: In Genesis 1:2, the Holy Spirit breathed on the waters of creation, making them a source of holiness.

Noah: God first chose to destroy the sinful world with water. This was a sign of baptism. Just as the waters covered the Earth and destroyed all things, so also baptism covers us and destroys sin. Noah and his family are the new humanity.

Red Sea: In the Red Sea, God saved his people as they walked through the waters of the Red Sea and evil is destroyed behind them.

Jordan River: As Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land through the waters of the Jordan River, baptism is our entry into the promised land of eternal life.

Establishment of the Sacrament: Baptism was first indicated when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. Later, Jesus’ words to Nicodemus (**John 3:5**) and the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19**) formally established baptism.

Who Baptizes? The **ordinary ministers** of the sacrament are bishops, priests, and deacons. However, since Baptism is necessary for salvation, it is possible for anyone to baptize in an emergency. **Baptism can never be forced or coerced**. One who has reached the age of reason must desire baptism. Infants are baptized when the parents intend to raise them in the faith of the Church. As they age, they still must choose to follow Christ, and infant baptism strengthens their ability to do so.

Baptism is the only way God revealed to us to receive the grace of salvation. **We are bound by the Sacraments, but God is not.** A child who dies before baptism may still be invited to choose to love God freely and spend eternity with God. Heaven requires a free choice. Not even a child can be forced against his or her will.

Baptism by Blood: This is a person who desires Baptism but is martyred for his faith before being baptized is baptized. **Baptism by Desire:** Those who believe and desire Baptism but die before Baptism are baptized. This applies to children who die before they are baptized when the parents desired Baptism. Those who *through no fault of their own* did not come to an explicit faith in Christ and, as a result, did not seek Baptism. In this case, God will judge their hearts. For a person who heard about Jesus but received only a message of hypocrisy, their rejection of the Gospel may have been a rejection of the hypocrisy of the messenger. God knows the heart and sees the intention in that heart.

The only case that **may** end with eternal damnation is the person who, though given every opportunity to hear the Gospel, fails to receive Baptism *through their own fault*. Free will is the key here. If God sees a freely chosen obstinacy in the heart, then this person is guilty and may lose the offer of eternal salvation.

The Celebration of Baptism

- Beginning at the Entrance of the Church
- Marking with the **Sign of the Cross:**
- Proclamation of the Scriptures
- Anointing with **Oil of Catechumens**
- Blessing of water
- Renunciation of sin and a profession of faith
- **Rite of Baptism (the essential part)**
- Anointing with **Chrism**
- Presentation of a baptismal garment
- Presentation of a lighted candle
- Blessing of the parents all present

The Sacrament of Confirmation

“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 1285*)

The Sacrament of Confirmation is NOT a maturity ritual, NOT a rite of passage, NOR a graduation ceremony from religious education. Confirmation is not about *you* confirming your choice to be Catholic; it's about *God the Holy Spirit* confirming you. It's something that God does to you and your eternal soul than something you do for God or yourself. Like Baptism, Confirmation imparts a spiritual **character** (an indelible mark) on your soul that becomes an ever-present source of grace. At Confirmation, the bond formed at Baptism is strengthened, empowering one to live out their baptismal calling. Confirmation gives the fullness of the Holy Spirit so one can live as called.

Sacred Scripture gives insight into the Sacrament of Confirmation, veiled in the Old Testament, promised in the Gospels, and made fully manifest in Acts of the Apostles.

Isaiah 11:2: The Holy Spirit will rest upon the promised Messiah. His very person will manifest all the glorious gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 61:1-3: “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, to

announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God; To comfort all who mourn; to place on those who mourn in Zion, a diadem instead of ashes, to give them oil of gladness instead of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a faint spirit.”

Although these passages apply to the Messiah, we become one with Christ through Baptism, so we also receive these gifts becoming Christ to the world, allowing the Holy Spirit to act in us in the same way he acted in Jesus.

Ezekial 36:27: “I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them.”

Gospels (Matthew 3:16 and John 1:32-33): At Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit was already fully alive in Jesus, so he did not receive the Holy Spirit at this moment. He was already one with the Spirit and the Father, and the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus was a manifestation of this reality.

Luke 12:12: For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.

John 16:7: Whoever believes in me, “Rivers of living water will flow from within him.” He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified (see John 7:38-39).

John 16:7: But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

Acts of the Apostles: In the Acts of the Apostles, the promises are fulfilled. The Spirit descending upon humanity at Pentecost works wonders in the lives of those who receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4: “When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. 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 and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

Acts 2:17-21: Peter stood up and revealed that it was a fulfillment of the Prophet Joel who said: “It will come to pass in the last days,” God says, “that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. Indeed, upon my servants and my handmaids I will pour out a portion of my spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy.”

Effects of Confirmation (Catechism 1303):

1. **It roots us more deeply in the divine filiation, which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”** (Romans 8:1): Recall our OCIA Mission Statement. “Divine filiation” deepens our bond with God the Father. While Baptism makes us sons and daughters of God, Confirmation strengthens that bond and enables us to “cry, ‘Abba Father!’” Confirmation does **not** make God the Father love us more than He already does. It does **not** mean that we become even more of a son or daughter of God. It gives new strength and zeal to claim God as our Father and share the Gospel with others.

2. **It unites us more firmly to Christ:** The Eucharist unites us profoundly with Christ. Confirmation also unites us more firmly to Christ Jesus. God is One, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As we are more intimately united to the Holy Spirit in Confirmation and enabled to fully “cry out” that God is our Father, then we are also more deeply united to God the Son. By his Incarnation, Jesus is the perfection of human nature and is the one who we are called not only to imitate as Christians but to be united with him, to live in him and have him live in us.

Galatians 2:20: “Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.”

3. **It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.** There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit:
 1. **Knowing God's will:** Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge
 2. **Doing God's will:** Fortitude, Reverence, Fear of the Lord
 1. **Wisdom** helps one see life from God's point of view. It keeps one from judging foolishly.
 2. **Understanding** allows one to comprehend all the truths of God and more deeply understand their meaning. Luke 24:45: Jesus "opened their minds" to understand the Scriptures.
 3. **Counsel** allows one to seek advice and offer correct advice to others.
 4. **Knowledge** allows one to understand that God's truth is necessary and to avoid worldly temptations
 5. **Fortitude** is "supernatural courage" in matters of faith and morality. It gives the grace to do good and avoid evil, to persevere through difficult situations.
 6. **Reverence** gives a deep adoration for God, the Mass, the Scriptures and all things pertaining to God. It gives respect for every person as an "*imago dei*" (image of God) and to revere human life from conception to natural death.
 7. **Fear of the Lord** begins with loving God for dread of loss of him (imperfect contrition) and the sadness this causes and moves one deeper into a fear of offending God or others out of love for them (perfect contrition).
4. **It renders our bond with the Church more perfect:** The Church is the Body of Christ. If Confirmation more firmly unites us to Christ Jesus, then we are also more deeply united to the Church herself through Confirmation. We are to live out the mission of the Church in a way commensurate with our unique vocation.
5. **It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend 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:** Confirmation enables one to accomplish this. This is a tough one. It may lead to persecution and humiliation as we profess our faith to a hostile world. For example, the truths about human sexuality, marriage, and the sins of contraception, fornication, homosexuality, abortion, and euthanasia are unpopular topics in today's world, even if spoken with compassion and love. The grace of Confirmation enables one to bring this message to a world desperately seeking the truth.

Receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation: For Latin Rite Catholics (that's us), Confirmation can be administered any time after the age of reason (about seven years old). Eastern Rite Catholics administer Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist together in infancy. In many countries, the local bishop decides the Confirmation age. Ideally, the bishop administers this sacrament because he is the bond with the Universal Church. The bishop is the primary sign of unity between the **particular church** (i.e., diocese) and the Universal Church and possesses the fullness of the priesthood. For practical reasons, the bishop may delegate the administration of the sacrament to a priest who imparts the same grace imparted by the bishop. Confirmation, like Baptism, is received once and only once. Even if one is not fully open to the grace of this Sacrament at the time of Confirmation, one can always open their hearts later.

Signs and Symbols:

Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and fragrance (balsam) and is blessed by the bishop during **Holy Week** at the **Chrism Mass**. Even if the bishop is not conferring Confirmation, he is still present through the consecrated the oil used.

Laying on of Hands: The bishop (or delegated priest) who confers the Confirmation anoints the forehead of the one being confirmed with Chrism and says, "**Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.**" He may lay hands on them as well.

The Sacrament of Confirmation imparts a spiritual **character**, **seal**, or an **indelible mark** upon the one receiving this Sacrament. The **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** produce the Holy Spirit's fruits of **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**.