



*How Catholics Pray*



Section 3:

*Baptism and Confirmation*



*To Luke E. Hart, exemplary evangelizer and Supreme Knight from 1953-64, the Knights of Columbus dedicates this Series with affection and gratitude.*

*The Knights of Columbus presents  
The Luke E. Hart Series  
Basic Elements of the Catholic Faith*

# BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

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PART TWO • SECTION THREE OF  
CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

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*What does a Catholic believe?  
How does a Catholic worship?  
How does a Catholic live?*

Based on the  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*

*by  
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## A WORD ABOUT THIS SERIES

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This booklet is one of a series of 30 that offer a colloquial expression of major elements of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Pope John Paul II, under whose authority the *Catechism* was first released in 1992, urged such versions so that each people and each culture can appropriate its content as its own.

The booklets are not a substitute for the *Catechism*, but are offered only to make its contents more accessible. The series is at times poetic, colloquial, playful, and imaginative; at all times it strives to be faithful to the Faith.

The Catholic Information Service recommends reading at least one Hart series booklet each month to gain a deeper, more mature understanding of the Faith.



# SECTION 3: BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

## The Sacrament of Baptism

### 1. *The importance of Baptism*

“Holy Baptism is...the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments” (CCC 1213)\*. It is like birth – indeed, Christ calls it a “new birth” (John 3:5), a birth from above. The most radical, life-changing event in your natural life is your birth, for it is the beginning of your whole life on earth; all subsequent changes are only the beginning of *parts* of your life. Similarly, the most radical, life-changing event in your supernatural life is its beginning: your baptism.

### 2. *The effects of Baptism*

Baptism has two effects, one of which takes something away and the other of which gives something. “Through Baptism we are [1] freed from sin and [2] reborn as sons of God; we become

\*CCC= *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

members of Christ...incorporated into the Church..." (CCC 1213).

A) Taken away is Original Sin, which is accomplished by a total cleansing and symbolized by washing with water. "This sacrament is also called '*the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit*'..."<sup>7</sup> (Titus 3:5; John 3:5; CCC 1215) "Regeneration" means "new beginning." "By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin"<sup>65</sup> (CCC 1263).

"Yet certain temporal [not eternal] consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weakness of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls *concupiscence*..." (CCC 1264).

B) The second, gift giving effect of Baptism is a real spiritual transformation, the beginning of our sharing in the very life of God himself which is the fundamental end and purpose of the whole Catholic religion (and of life itself!). This mystery is called by many different names, such as "supernatural life," "eternal life," "divine life," "sanctifying grace," "the Kingdom of Heaven," "the Kingdom of God," "justification," "sanctification," and "salvation." This all begins in Baptism, in which we die to our old self and are "born again" to this new identity. "Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature' [2 Corinthians 5:17], an adopted son of God [Galatians 4:5-7], who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature'<sup>69</sup> [2 Peter 1:4], member of Christ [1 Corinthians 5:17] and co-heir with



him,<sup>70</sup> [Romans 8:17] and a temple of the Holy Spirit<sup>71</sup> [1 Corinthians 6:19]” (CCC 1265). He is given “sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*...the theological virtues... [and] the gifts of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1266). “Thus the whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life has its roots in Baptism” (CCC 1266).

“Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation”<sup>82</sup> (CCC 1272). “Baptism is indeed the seal of eternal life.”<sup>86</sup> The faithful Christian who has ‘kept the seal’ until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his Baptism, will be able to depart this life ‘marked with the sign of faith,’<sup>87</sup> with his baptismal faith, in expectation of the blessed vision of God – the consummation of faith...” (CCC 1274).

There is also a communal aspect to this second positive effect of Baptism. “From the baptismal font is born the one People of God of the New Covenant [i.e., the Church], which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes: ‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’”<sup>72</sup> (1 Corinthians 12:13; CCC 1267). “Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us”<sup>75</sup> (1 Corinthians 5:15; CCC 1269). “Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians,

including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC 1271).

### 3. *Immersion and sprinkling as alternative forms of Baptism*

The two effects of Baptism are a death and resurrection. This double event is symbolized by the water: “This sacrament is called *Baptism* after the central rite by which it is carried out: to baptize (Greek *baptizein*) means to ‘plunge’ or ‘immerse’; the ‘plunge’ into the water symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as ‘a new creature’”<sup>6</sup> (CCC 1214).

For this reason, “Baptism is performed in the most expressive way by triple immersion in the baptismal water. However, from ancient times it has also been able to be conferred by pouring the water three times over the candidate’s head” (CCC 1239). “In the Latin Church this triple infusion is accompanied by the minister’s words: ‘N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ In the Eastern liturgies the catechumen turns toward the East and the priest says: ‘The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ At the invocation of each Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the priest immerses the candidate in the water and raises him up again” (CCC 1240).

### 4. *The water symbolism in Baptism*

Few things in nature are as necessary to us as water, and few things are more beautiful and wonderful. Our hearts are naturally drawn to oceans, rivers, and lakes, and our souls are as refreshed by the rain as is the earth itself. Saint Teresa of Avila said that she

loved to sit by water for hours and let it teach her. For water is the first material creation of God mentioned in the Genesis story, and God has used this element in a unique way throughout the various stages of salvation history. All of these ways point forward to and are completed in Baptism, as the *Catechism* explains.

- A) “Since the beginning of the world, water, so humble and wonderful a creature, has been the source of life and fruitfulness. Sacred Scripture sees it as ‘overshadowed’ by the Spirit of God:<sup>12</sup> ‘At the very dawn of creation / your Spirit breathed on the waters...’<sup>13</sup> (Easter Vigil; CCC 1218). The water that is necessary for natural life symbolizes supernatural life.
- B) “The Church has seen in Noah’s ark a prefiguring of salvation by Baptism, for by it ‘a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water’<sup>14</sup> (1 Peter 3:20; CCC 1219).
- C) “...[T]he water of the sea is a symbol of death and so can represent the mystery of the cross. By this symbolism Baptism signifies communion with Christ’s death” (CCC 1220). Thus in the early Church, in Eastern liturgies, and in Protestant Baptist baptisms, the person is baptized by being plunged – “buried” – into the water.
- D) “But above all, the crossing of the Red Sea, literally the liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, announces the liberation wrought by Baptism:  
‘You freed the children of Abraham from the slavery of Pharaoh, bringing them dry-shod through the waters of the Red Sea, to be an image of the people set free in Baptism’<sup>16</sup> (Easter Vigil; CCC 1221).

In the Exodus, the same waters brought death to the Egyptians and life to the Jews; in Baptism, the same waters bring death to sin and new life in Christ.

- E) “Finally, Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the People of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham’s descendants, an image of eternal life” (CCC 1222).
- F) “All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by Saint John the Baptist in the Jordan.<sup>17</sup> After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...’<sup>18</sup> (Matthew 28:19-20; CCC 1223).

##### 5. *The relation between Baptism and Christ*

First, we are baptized “*into Christ*” (Romans 6:3).

Second, Christ *instituted* and commanded Baptism (Matthew 28:19-20).

Third, Christ also provided the *power* for Baptism. He is the source of its supernatural power to remove Original Sin and instill divine life into the soul of the baptized, so that Baptism actually saves us (1 Peter 3:21).

Some Protestants argue that Baptism can’t save us because it is Christ’s death on the cross that has already saved us. Christ’s death does save us, but this is communicated to us through Baptism (Romans 6:3).

This communication is not just a legal transaction, God crediting to our “account” Christ’s righteousness and crediting to his “account” our sins. It is more like an organic “grafting” than an external legal relationship (see Romans 11:17-24 and John 15:1-6). Christ’s death 2000 years ago causes our salvation today by God’s *putting us into* Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection through Baptism (Romans 6:34; Colossians 2:12).

The water into which we are plunged in Baptism is not just a universal natural symbol, but also points to a specific historical fact: “The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life”<sup>23</sup> (see John 19:34; 1 John 5:64; CCC 1225). Baptism is not just a symbolic remembering of that; that is, it was not simply a symbol that foreshadowed Baptism. “Baptism comes...from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved”<sup>25</sup> (Saint Ambrose; CCC 1225).

Baptism does what Christ does because Baptism *is* what Christ does: give us a new birth and make us children of God. “The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: ‘Our Father’” (CCC 1243). We do not become children of God by natural birth; we become children of our natural parents by natural birth. We become children of God by being “born again,” and this happens in Baptism (John 3:3-6).

#### 6. *Is Baptism necessary for salvation?*

A) *The Baptism of water:* “The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation”<sup>59</sup> (John 3:5; CCC

1257). However, this does not mean that all the unbaptized are unsaved. “*God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments*” (CCC 1257). For sacramental baptism, or water baptism, is not the only kind of baptism.

- B) *The Baptism of blood*: “The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This *Baptism of blood*, like the *desire for Baptism* [the ‘Baptism of Desire:’ see next paragraph], brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament” (CCC 1258).
- C) *The Baptism of desire*: “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (CCC 1259).
- D) *The Baptism of implicit desire*: “Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have *desired Baptism explicitly* if they had known its necessity” (CCC 1260).
- E) *Unbaptized infants*: “As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God, who desires that men should be saved [1 Timothy 2:4], and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: ‘Let the

children come to me, do not hinder them’<sup>63</sup> [Mark 10:14], allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism” (CCC 1261).

F) *Limbo*: Many Catholic theologians in the past have reasoned that children who die unbaptized go to limbo, a place of eternal peace but without the vision of God, since these infants have committed no actual sins and therefore have not chosen or deserved Hell, but they are born with Original Sin and therefore cannot enter Heaven. But most theologians now believe God will somehow get his innocent little ones into Heaven. We cannot limit God’s love or his cleverness in arranging for his loving will to be done. God is not limited to any one means.

## 7. *Adult and infant Baptism*

“Since the beginning of the Church, adult Baptism is the common practice where the proclamation of the Gospel is still new” (CCC 1247). But also “the practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of apostolic preaching, when whole ‘households’ received baptism, infants may also have been baptized”<sup>53</sup> (Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16; CCC 1252).

The reasons for infant Baptism are as follows.

A) “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted with original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and

brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called”<sup>50</sup> (CCC 1250).

- B) Infant Baptism shows our faith in God’s initiative. “The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism” (CCC 1250). Infant Baptism fits the nature of God’s love: God loves us before we love him. Even our desire for him is his gift.
- C) Infant Baptism shows the wideness of God’s grace. God withholds his love from no one. Intelligence is not a qualification, only openness. And who is more open than an infant? There is no actual sin, no guilt, no reservation.
- D) Loving parents want to give their children the very best of everything. Nothing is better than God’s grace, nothing is more necessary for a good and happy life. “The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth”<sup>51</sup> (CCC 1250).
- E) Christ told his apostles to let the children come to him (Mark 10:14-16).
- F) God deals with us not only as individuals but also as families. Throughout Scripture, covenant (marriage) and kinship (family) are central.
- G) Infant baptism is Scriptural (see Acts 16:15).
- H) Finally, since we simply cannot understand how God’s grace works, we cannot limit it.

#### 8. *How Baptism fits into the liturgical order*

Baptism manifests much historical variation of times, places, and rites; but also an invariable essential structure.



“From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accompanied by a journey and initiation in several stages. The journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: [1] proclamation of the Word [Gospel], [2] acceptance of the Gospel [faith] entailing conversion [change of mind, heart, and life], [3] profession of faith, [4] Baptism itself, [5] the outpouring of the Holy Spirit [expressed particularly in Confirmation], and [6] admission to Eucharistic communion” (CCC 1229). These last three steps are the three “sacraments of initiation.”

“This initiation has varied greatly through the centuries, according to circumstances” (CCC 1230). “Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist”<sup>37</sup> (CCC 1233).

### 9. *After Baptism*

“For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents’ help is important. So too is the role of the *godfather* and *godmother*, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized – child or adult – on the road of Christian life”<sup>55</sup> (CCC 1255). The Church’s “new rite [of Baptism]...places the parents at the very heart of things, where they belong.... They renounce sin and profess faith; it is their responsibility to see to it that their lives give testimony to the faith they have professed, for they will be the first Christian influence on this child. But parents need help. The godparents can be looked upon as a kind of link to the extended family of the Church” (Fr. Peter Stravinskas, *Understanding the Sacraments*).

“For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow *after* Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises” (CCC 1254).

10. *Who can baptize?*

“The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and the priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon.<sup>57</sup> In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize....<sup>58</sup> The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation”<sup>59</sup> (CCC 1256).

11. *Who can be baptized?*

In the early days of the Church, baptism of adults was the most common practice, as it still is in areas where the Church is only beginning to be established. In areas where the Church is already well established, most people are baptized as infants. Baptism requires faith on the part of the person to be baptized, “not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop” (CCC 1253).

While adults must enter the catechumenate to receive instruction in faith prior to their baptism, the baptism of an infant depends on the faith of the community of believers which, through the parents and godparents, undertakes the responsibility to educate the child in the faith.

The gift of baptism to the child before he or she has made a personal act of acceptance of faith is an illustration of how God gives grace freely and generously, without any prior merit on our part (CCC 1250).

# The Sacrament of Confirmation

## 1. *What is Confirmation and why is it needed?*

The “point” of Confirmation is that it is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.

Why is it needed? Because of the difference it makes. And what difference does it make? If you read the first five books of the New Testament, you can see the answer for yourself, just as the world did: the sacrament of Confirmation’s need and purpose is to make the same difference to the individual Catholic that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost made to the Church. “[T]he 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” (CCC 1302).

Why is the Holy Spirit needed? Isn’t Christ enough? The Holy Spirit is needed to bring Christ closer. Christ told his disciples that it would be better for them if he went away physically so that he could send his Spirit to them (John 16:7). For the Spirit would be *in* them, even more intimately than Jesus was with them in the flesh. For love always seeks maximum intimacy, and God is Love.

## 2. *The effects of Confirmation*

The effects of this intimacy can be seen by contrasting the disciples (especially Peter, who is mentioned the most) “before and after” the coming of the Spirit – that is, in the four Gospels and then in the Acts of the Apostles. Christ told them they were not yet ready to preach and testify and evangelize and suffer for him until the Spirit would come (Acts 1:4-5).

The reason for the sacrament of Confirmation is the same as the reason for Pentecost. Confirmation “confirms,” that is, “firms up” or strengthens, the supernatural life within us that we received in Baptism; it strengthens us to be mature, adult witnesses for Christ. The old formula was that Confirmation made us into “soldiers of Christ.” Though we may no longer prefer the military imagery today, the point remains valid that Confirmation prepares us for spiritual warfare, for an active mission.

And it does this by “baptizing” (immersing) us in the Holy Spirit. This is a crucial change. For Christ, our “objective” or “external” Lord and Savior and ideal, now becomes also our “subjective” or internal source of power by sending us his Spirit. Just as children become adult when they internalize the laws and values of their parents, instead of just reacting to their parents’ external authority, so Christians become adult when the Spirit adds this internal source of motivation and power.

The need for Confirmation is most obvious when considering *infant* Baptism. Since an infant, who has not reached the age of the exercise of reason and free choice, cannot personally put forth an act of faith, the faith of the parents and of the Church substitutes, or stands in for, the faith of the infant. It is designed as a temporary, not a permanent, substitute. The infant will have to freely accept, by his own will, the grace of God he has received at the will of his parents in infant Baptism.

For this reason, careful education and preparation of the candidates for Confirmation is essential. It cannot be an “automatic” social occasion, but must be clearly understood and freely chosen – like marriage, or like enlisting in the army.

And – also like marriage or enlistment – Confirmation is not an end but a beginning. Unfortunately, many Catholics treat Confirmation as the end of their religious education, instead of the end of its childhood phase and the beginning of its adult phase. A personal relationship with God in “spiritual marriage,” like a personal relationship with a spouse in natural marriage, cannot be static; it either grows or shrinks.

### 3. *Confirmation completes Baptism*

Confirmation is the completion of Baptism. It is the sealing of the Baptismal covenant relationship, or spiritual marriage between the Christian and Christ.

Because of this close link between the two sacraments, it is desirable (though not strictly required) that the same person who was the godparent in Baptism be the sponsor in Confirmation.

The link between the two sacraments is expressed more strongly in the Church’s Eastern rites: “In the East, ordinarily the priest who baptizes also immediately confers Confirmation in one and the same celebration. But he does so with sacred chrism [oil] consecrated by the patriarch or the bishop, thus expressing the apostolic unity of the Church...”<sup>129</sup> (CCC 1312).

### 4. *The powers received in Confirmation*

Those who are confirmed receive two powers, one for themselves and one for others.

- A) They receive, first of all, the power to live a life of personal holiness in an unholy world, especially the courage to sacrifice and suffer for Christ. Christians are always described in the New Testament as a people set apart (indeed, the very word “holy” means “set apart”).

Christians are always called to be “counter-cultural.” Their guide is not their society, but their Lord.

- B) They also receive the power to *spread* that Faith by word and example, that is, to be witnesses. “For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] 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’”<sup>89</sup> (CCC 1285). Confirmation “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”<sup>117</sup> (CCC 1303).

### 5. *Charismatic gifts*

In addition to these two graces (paragraph 4), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whether in Confirmation or at any other time, often includes the grace of “charismatic gifts” (1 Corinthians 12-14; CCC 799-801). These are special supernatural gifts, different gifts for different Christians, all of them to be used for the work of the Church as a whole (1 Corinthians 12). One “gift” given to *all* by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the gift of understanding, especially the understanding of Scripture, which can “light up” from within in a new way when the same Spirit that inspired its ancient authors to write it now inspires the present-day Christian to read it.

### 6. *The historical origin of Confirmation*

- A) “In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for

Messiah...”<sup>90</sup> (cf. Isaiah 11:2; 61:1; Luke 4:16-22; CCC 1286).

- B) When he came, “[h]e was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit (John 3:34; CCC 1286).
- C) “Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit”<sup>94</sup> (Luke 12:12; John 3:5-8, 7:37-39; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), a promise which he fulfilled...at Pentecost”<sup>95</sup> (CCC 1287).
- D) ““From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ’s will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit...” (CCC 1288).
- E) “[T]he sacrament of Confirmation...perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church”<sup>99</sup> (CCC 1288)

### 7. *The liturgical rite of Confirmation*

In the early Church, the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist were all received together, forming a unified rite of Christian initiation (CCC 1212, 1290, 1298, 1306). This is still done today in the Eastern rites of the Church, where infants are baptized, chrismated or confirmed, and communicated.

“In the first centuries Confirmation generally comprised one single celebration with Baptism, forming with it a ‘double sacrament’....[But] the multiplication of infant baptisms all through the year...prevented the bishop from being present at all baptismal celebrations. In the West the desire to reserve the completion of Baptism [that is, Confirmation] to the bishop

caused the temporal separation of the two sacraments. The East has kept them united, so that Confirmation is conferred by the priest who baptizes. But he can do so only with the ‘myron’ [oil] consecrated by a bishop”<sup>100</sup> (CCC 1290).

#### 8. *The “mark” received in Confirmation*

“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.<sup>105</sup> Hence soldiers were marked with their leader’s seal and slaves with their master’s...”<sup>106</sup> (CCC 1295). “This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever...”<sup>109</sup> (CCC 1296).

Therefore, “[l]ike Baptism, which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark...”<sup>119</sup> (CCC 1304).

#### 9. *Who can receive Confirmation?*

“Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>121</sup> ...Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity...[W]ithout Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete” (CCC 1306).

“For centuries, Latin custom has indicated ‘the age of discretion’ as the reference point for receiving Confirmation” (CCC 1307). All cultures have some “coming of age” rite of passage to mark personal adulthood.

But “although Confirmation is sometimes called the ‘sacrament of Christian maturity,’ we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth.... Saint Thomas



Aquinas reminds us of this: ‘Age of body does not determine age of soul. Even in childhood man can attain spiritual maturity.... Many children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood’<sup>124</sup> (*Summa Theologiae* III, 72, 8 *ad* 2; cf. Wisdom 4:8; CCC 1308).

#### 10. *Preparation for Confirmation*

“*Preparation* for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit – his actions, his gifts, and his biddings...”<sup>125</sup> (CCC 1309). God speaks in a “still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12), and if we are to hear it, we need to develop the lifelong habit of listening to this voice – in our personal prayer, in reading Scripture, in our participation in the Church’s liturgy, and in all of life’s occasions and relationships. This should be seriously undertaken both in preparation for and in application of Confirmation, both before and after.

#### 11. *Who administers Confirmation?*

“*In the Latin Rite*, the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop. If the need arises, the bishop may grant the faculty of administering Confirmation to priests, although it is fitting that he confer it himself.... Bishops are the successors of the apostles....The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ” (CCC 1313).

“If a Christian is in danger of death, any priest should give him Confirmation.<sup>132</sup> Indeed the Church desires that none of her

children, even the youngest, should depart this world without having been perfected by the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1314).

In the truest sense, it is only Jesus Christ who administers the sacrament of Confirmation, for it is only Christ who gives the Holy Spirit.

12. *The “gifts of the Holy Spirit” and the “fruits of the Holy Spirit”*

“The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ...”<sup>109</sup> (CCC 1831).

“The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: ‘charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity’”<sup>112</sup> (Galatians 5:22-23; CCC 1832).

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**Notes from the Catechism in Order of Their Appearance in Quotations Used in this Section**

<sup>7</sup> *Ti* 3:5; *Jn* 3:5.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1316.

<sup>69</sup> *2 Cor* 5:17; *2 Pet* 1:4; cf. *Gal* 4:5-7.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *1 Cor* 6:15; 12:27; *Rom* 8:17.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *1 Cor* 6:19.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Rom* 8:29; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609-1619.

<sup>86</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Dem ap.* 3: SCh 62, 32.

<sup>87</sup> *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 97.

<sup>72</sup> *1 Cor* 12:13.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *1 Cor* 6:19; *2 Cor* 5:15.

<sup>6</sup> *2 Cor* 5:17; *Gal* 6:15; cf. *Rom* 6:3-4; *Col* 2:12.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Gen* 1:2.

- <sup>13</sup> *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water.
- <sup>14</sup> *1 Pet* 3:20.
- <sup>16</sup> *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water: “Abrahae filios per mare Rubrum sicco vestigio transire fecisti, ut plebs, a Pharaonis servitute liberata, populum baptizatorum praefiguraret.”
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. *Mt* 3:13.
- <sup>18</sup> *Mt* 28:19-20; cf. *Mk* 16:15-16.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. *Jn* 19:34; *1 Jn* 5:6-8.
- <sup>25</sup> St. Ambrose, *De sacr.* 2, 2, 6; PL 16, 444; cf. *Jn* 3:5.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. *Jn* 3:5.
- <sup>63</sup> *Mk* 10:14; cf. *1 Tim* 2:4.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. *Acts* 16:15, 33; 18:8; *1 Cor* 1:16; CDF, instruction, *Pastoralis actio*: AAS 72 (1980) 1137-56.
- <sup>50</sup> Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1514; cf. *Col* 1:12-14.
- <sup>51</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 867; CCEO, cann. 681; 686, 1.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. AG 14; CIC, cann. 851; 865; 866.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. CIC, cann. 872-874.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 861 § 1; CCEO, can. 677 § 1.
- <sup>58</sup> CIC, can. 861 § 2.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. *1 Tim* 2:4.
- <sup>129</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 883 § 2.
- <sup>89</sup> *LG* 11; cf. *OC*, Introduction 2.
- <sup>117</sup> Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1319; *LG* 11; 12.
- <sup>90</sup> Cf. *Is* 11:2; 61:1; *Lk* 4:16-22.
- <sup>94</sup> Cf. *Lk* 12:12; *Jn* 3:5-8; 7-37-39; 16:7-15; *Acts* 1:8.
- <sup>95</sup> Cf. *Jn* 20:22; *Acts* 2:1-4.
- <sup>99</sup> Paul VI, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 659; cf. *Acts* 8:15-17; 19:5-6; *Heb* 6:2.
- <sup>100</sup> Cf. CCEO, can. 695 § 1; 696 § 1.
- <sup>105</sup> Cf. *Gen* 38:18; 41:42; *Deut* 32:34; *CT* 8:6.
- <sup>106</sup> Cf. *1 Kgs* 21:8; *Jer* 32:10; *Is* 29:11.
- <sup>109</sup> Cf. *Rv* 7:2-3; 9:4; *Ez* 9:4-6.
- <sup>119</sup> Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609; *Lk* 24:48-49.
- <sup>121</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 889 § 1.
- <sup>124</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *STb* III, 72, 8, *ad* 2; cf. *Wis* 4:8.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *OC* Introduction 3.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 883 § 3.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Is* 11:1-2.

<sup>112</sup> *Gal* 5:22-23 (Vulg.).





*“Faith is a gift of God which enables us to know and love Him. Faith is a way of knowing, just as reason is. But living in faith is not possible unless there is action on our part. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to make a decision to respond to divine Revelation, and to follow through in living out our response.”*

– United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, 38.

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Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 34  
Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission  
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