

10. Confirmation

Christian Belief

Christian Living

Church

Creation

Education

Fundamentalism

God

Islam

Jesus

Liturgy

Mission

MSC

New Testament

Old Testament

Pope Francis

Prayer

Priesthood

Religious Life

RCIA/Cursillo

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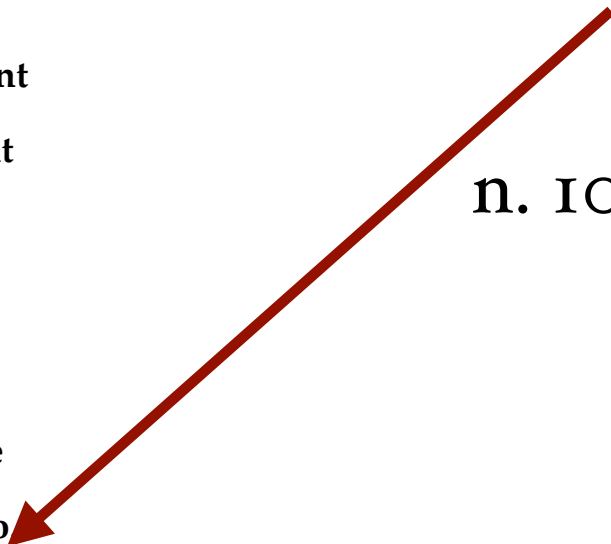
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Welcome to my site

Index of Topics

Click on “RCIA” (left menu)

n. 10. Confirmation



Confirmation

Closely linked with Baptism is the Sacrament of Confirmation, which completes and confirms the grace received at Baptism.

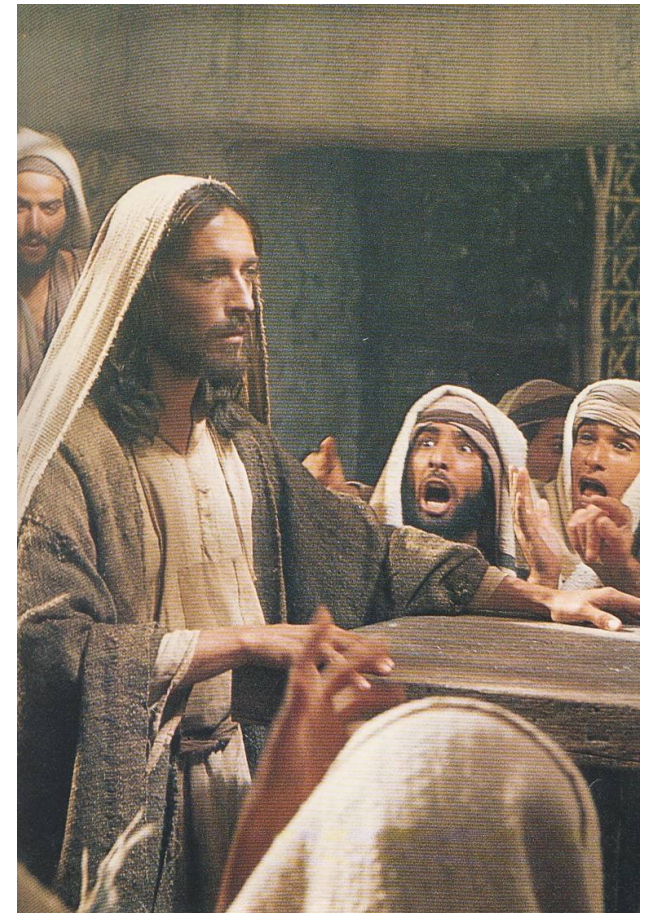
The focus of baptism is on our dying and rising with Jesus. The focus of Confirmation is on Jesus giving us his Spirit, the Spirit who is the love binding Jesus to God.

The Gospel of Luke highlights the place of the Spirit in Jesus' conception (1:26-38).

Luke describes how the Holy Spirit came down upon him at his Baptism (3:22), and how 'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness' (4:1), after which 'Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee' (4:14).

In the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus chose the following text from Isaiah to describe how he saw his mission:

‘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 oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’ (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).



Luke also gives us the following cry of Jesus:

‘I came to bring fire to the earth,
and how I wish it were already kindled!’ (12:49).

Jesus’ public ministry is the story of how he constantly shared this Spirit with others. As John says: ‘He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure’ (John 3:34).

His giving reached its climax at his crucifixion, when he could say from the cross 'It is finished'. Only then, when he bowed his head in death, could he give over the fullness of the Spirit (John 19:30). John goes on to describe what happened just after Jesus' death:

'One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out ... As Scripture says: They will look on the one whom they have pierced' (John 19:34, 37).

John referred to this outpouring of the Spirit earlier in his Gospel: 'Jesus exclaimed: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water"'. Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:37-39).

- This is the Spirit that Jesus promised at the Last Supper:

‘I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever’ (John 14:16)

‘The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you’ (John 14:26).

‘Jesus said: “It is finished”. Then he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit ... One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out ... As Scripture says: “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”’ (John 19:30, 34, 37).



‘From the heart of Jesus pierced on Calvary, I see a new world coming forth: a great and life-giving world, inspired by love and mercy; a world which the Church must perpetuate on the whole earth’ (Jules Chevalier, 1900).



The Spirit that Jesus gave the world in his last breath, is the Spirit that he gives on the day of his Resurrection:

On the evening of his resurrection Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room. He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22).

In his second volume Luke chronicles the action of God's Spirit in the Church. He begins with a brief reminder that the disciples had various encounters with the risen Jesus. He mentions, too, the following instruction given to them by Jesus just prior to his ascension:

‘Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’ (Acts 1:4-5).

Luke then takes us to the upstairs room:

‘In the upstairs room where they were staying, the Twelve were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers’ (Acts 1:13-14).



In a powerfully dramatic scene, Luke links the gift of the Holy Spirit with the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, for it was when the pilgrims returned to Jerusalem after the Passover of the crucifixion, that the disciples began their mission, inspired and encouraged by Jesus' Spirit:

‘When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together, when suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:1-4).

- Luke describes the outpouring of the Spirit on a Gentile community:

‘When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 8:14-17).

The Letters of Paul are filled with references to the Spirit experienced in the Christian community. The following should suffice as a reminder:

‘God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying “Abba!” (Father)’ (Galatians 4:6).

‘The Spirit of God dwells in you’ (Romans 8:9).

‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ (Romans 5:5).

In John's Letter we read:

‘The anointing that you received from him abides in you’ (1John 2:27).

‘There are three that bear witness to Jesus: the Spirit and the water and the blood’ (1John 5:7-8).

‘Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- It roots us more deeply in sharing the life of God’s Son, which makes us cry, “Abba! Father”;
- It unites us more firmly to Christ;
- It increases in us the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- It binds us more perfectly to the Church;
- 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 him more courageously and never to be ashamed of the Cross.’

n. 767

‘The Church by its very nature is missionary, sent by Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them’ (see Matthew 28:19-20).

n. 1294

‘Those anointed in Confirmation share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off “the aroma of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15).

The Church (Christian Community) is the ‘Temple of the Holy Spirit’

‘Where the Church is there also is God’s Spirit. Where God’s Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace’ (Irenaeus AH 3.24.1)

It is the Spirit of God that fills all things. Now, raised to the fullness of life by his Father, it is the Spirit of God in Jesus - the Spirit of love which binds him to the Father - that fills all things, giving life wherever it is welcome. The sacrament of this Spirit, the place where Jesus' Spirit is powerfully effective is the community of the Church, an extension in the world of Jesus' body, carrying out the will of God and bringing about on earth the reign of God's love (see Colossians 1:19 and 2:9).

‘The Risen Christ is now at work in human hearts through the power of his Spirit, not only arousing in them a desire for the world to come, but also animating, purifying and reinforcing the noble aspirations which drive the human family to make its life one that is more human and to direct the whole earth to this end’ (Vat II, G&S, §38).

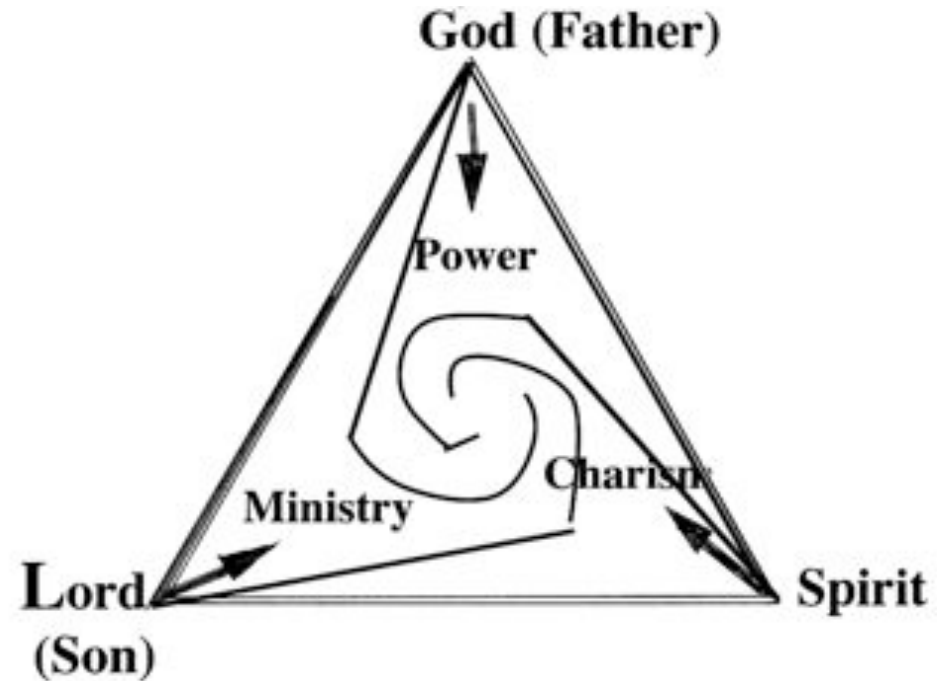
1Corinthians 12:4-7

‘There are varieties of gifts
[charisma]
but the same Spirit;

there are varieties of ministries
[diakonia]
but the same Lord;

there are varieties of
ways of exercising power
[energema]
but it is the same God who activates
them all in everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of
the Spirit for a good purpose.



‘The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and courage, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord’ (Isaiah 11:2).

From the Rite of Confirmation n. 25

‘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.’

1. The gift of **Wisdom** opens us to what Jesus reveals about God and about ourselves.
2. The gift of **Understanding** opens us to grasp the implications of revealed truth for our lives. “Do not seek to understand in order to believe. Seek rather to believe in order to understand.” (Augustine).
3. The gift of **Right Judgment** opens us to inspiration concerning our behaviour: how best to respond to circumstances in a way that is true to our deepest self, responsive to grace, and creative.
4. The gift of **Knowledge** opens us to grasp truth more readily and more profoundly.

5. The gift of **Courage** keeps us trusting and alert to God's grace even when circumstances tend to reduce us to fear and impotence.

‘God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it’ (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Reflection on the crucifix of San Damiano

‘It is courage that makes saints and courage is nothing more nor less than trusting in God’s grace which is always present. For in our trials and sufferings God is always there like the space that surrounds a bird.’



6. The gift of **Piety** is the grace to know God as “Father/Mother”, and to relate to others as brothers & sisters



Michelangelo

Fear of the Lord

The expression ‘**the fear of the Lord**’ occurs only twice in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 5:11 and in Acts 9:31.

The Book of Proverbs expresses its meaning well in the following texts: ‘The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.’(Proverbs 8:13). ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight’(Proverbs 9:10). ‘The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life’(Proverbs 14:27). Isaiah speaks of the fear of the Lord as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:3), and writes: ‘The fear of the Lord is Zion’s treasure’ (Isaiah 33:6). The fear of the Lord is the opposite of ‘pride and arrogance’. It is ‘knowing the Holy One’: knowing that God is the creator and sustainer of life, the redeemer and saviour. It results in a commitment to seek and to carry out God’s will, knowing that all our hope is in God, the ‘fountain of life’.

‘Do not be afraid. God has come only to test you and to put Fear of the Lord upon you so that you do not sin’ (Exodus 20:20).

‘Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments’ (Psalm 112:1).

‘Let those who fear the Lord say:
His steadfast love endures forever’ (Psalm 118:2)

‘The Lord looks on those who fear him ,
on those who hope in his love’ (Psalm 33:18).

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control’ (Galatians 5:22-23).

‘The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. All things work together for good for those who love God’ (Romans 8:26-28).

Sequence
for
Pentecost

(attributed
to Stephen
Langdon,
died 1228).

Holy Spirit, Lord of light,
from the clear celestial height, your pure beaming radiance give.
Come, Father of the poor,
come with treasures which endure, come, light of all that live!
You, of all consolers best,
you, the soul's delightful guest, such refreshing peace bestow.
You in toil are comfort sweet;
pleasant coolness in the heat; solace in the midst of woe.
Light immortal, light divine,
visit now these hearts of thine and our inmost being fill.
If you take your grace away,
nothing pure in us will stay, all our good is turned to ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
on our dryness pour your dew; wash the stains of sin away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
melt the frozen; warm the chill; guide the steps that go astray.
We pray you, we who evermore
you confess and you adore, with your sevenfold gifts descend:
Give us comfort when we die;
give us life with you on high; give us joys that never end.

The Rite of Confirmation n. 1288 • The laying on of hands by the bishop

n. 1313

‘The administration of this sacrament by the bishop demonstrates that the effect of the sacrament 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.’

n. 1289 & 1293

- The anointing with the sacred oil (chrism) is a symbol of consecration to Christ as priest-prophet-king (see Baptism), with a special reference to his mission.

n. 1295 & 1304

- Just as baptism marks us forever with a seal that consecrates us to Christ, so Confirmation marks us forever with a seal that consecrates us to the Holy Spirit.

‘God establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts’ (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

‘You were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit’ (Ephesians 1:13).

‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption’ (Ephesians 4:30).

