

LESSON 32: CONFIRMATION

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 8	:	Cover points 1 to 5
For Intermediate Level / Age 11	:	Cover points 1 to 7
For Advanced Level / Age 14	:	Cover points 1 to 8

Revision from previous lesson:

In the past couple of lessons, we learned that the Catholic Church has seven Sacraments that were instituted by Jesus Christ for His Bride. We also learned about the first Sacrament that every believer needs to receive to enter into the Body of Christ, the Church. In this lesson, we will learn about another Sacrament that every believer should receive: Confirmation.

Current lesson:

1. Baptism and Confirmation are actually two sides of the same coin. Traditionally, they were administered together, and this continues to be the practice of the Eastern Christians. However, in the Latin Rite Church, the two Sacraments were separated over the centuries, so that Baptism was administered for an infant who would then receive Confirmation when he/she arrived at the age of reason.
2. Scripture passages point to the importance of a separate occasion of empowerment upon one's Baptism:

John 3:4: "Jesus answered (Nicodemus), 'Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.'"

Acts 8:14-18: "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who went down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

Acts 19:1-6: "When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid (his) hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them..."

3. The Scriptural pattern of Confirmation is to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22: "But the one who gives us security (Vulgate, *confirmat*, "confirms") with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment."

Ephesians 1:13: "In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."



4. The Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, but he can (and often does) delegate the role to a priest.
5. There are five effects of having received the Sacrament of Confirmation (CCC 1303):
 - A) You are rooted more deeply as a child of God.
 - B) You are more firmly united to Christ.
 - C) The gifts of the Holy Spirit increase in you.
 - D) Your bond with the Catholic Church is made more perfect.
 - E) You are given special strength to witness to the faith.
6. Upon receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, a person receives the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit:
 - A) Wisdom
 - B) Understanding
 - C) Counsel
 - D) Strength (Fortitude)
 - E) Knowledge
 - F) Fear of the Lord
 - G) Piety

These gifts are not to be ignored. They are to be used well so that we bear much fruit.

7. In Galatians 5:22-23, Saint Paul lists nine fruits of the Holy Spirit that result as we cultivate the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These fruits come from the characteristics of the Holy Spirit Himself, and because He is a Person of the Holy Trinity, they also reveal the characteristics of God. The Holy Spirit increases these fruits in our lives as we cooperate with the grace that He gives and grow in holiness.
 - A) *Love*. We find ourselves loving God and neighbour in a more selfless way, without seeking so much of our own benefit and being willing to be more sacrificial in our serving and giving.
 - B) *Joy*. We experience a sense of interior contentment and happiness in living our lives with the Lord. This joy may not be a temporary ecstatic feeling, but it is constantly present as a deep sense of happiness because we are right with God. It remains present even though we may have to suffer hardships in life for the sake of the Gospel.
 - C) *Peace*. Even though life may be difficult and we may have to go through much suffering for reasons of illness or abuse by people, we have a deep sense of peace within us that is beyond our understanding. This peace comes from knowing that God is with us through His Holy Spirit and will never leave us.
 - D) *Patience*. We are long-suffering even if our plans are interrupted or delayed. We do not complain or whine about the inconveniences of waiting. If we have to wait for our pain to be alleviated, or even if it never gets alleviated, we bear with it and do not allow it to diminish our confidence on God's goodness.

- E) *Kindness*. We are well-meaning and merciful towards others, always intending to uphold their wellbeing and benefit. We go the extra mile to bring help, reprieve, rest, comfort to those who need it.
- F) *Generosity*. We are able to trust that God will always provide for our needs, and as a result, we are not stingy about sharing what we have with others. In fact, we find joy and meaning in sharing our blessings with other people.
- G) *Faithfulness*. We are loyal to our family, friends, and associates. Most of all, we are loyal to the call of the Gospel life. Just as the Holy Spirit is always with us and never leaves us, we too remain at His side and are always docile to His guidance.
- H) *Gentleness*. We are not abrasive or rough in our treatment of other people. Rather, we are sensitive towards them in a positive way, always being alert towards their physical, emotional, and physical needs. We find ourselves being tender towards God and other people, always dignifying people and never putting them down through our actions and words.
- I) *Self-control*. We have mastery over our emotions and our responses in various situations of life, whether they be hunger or anger or emergencies. We are not controlled or taken over by situations, or temptations. We remain calm and collected because we are deeply aware that the Holy Spirit in us is sovereign over all situations of life.

St Thomas Aquinas (13th century) pointed out that the word “fruits” found in St Paul’s passage in its original Greek language (*karpos*) is actually in the singular and not the plural form. Hence, it should actually be *fruit* rather than fruits of the Holy Spirit. This means that all those nine qualities are different expressions, or characteristics, of the one fruit of the Holy Spirit. None of them should be excluded from the list of characteristics made visible in us as a result of our being filled with the Holy Spirit.

8. At some point of your Catholic life, you will probably be hearing certain groups in the Catholic Church mentioning the term “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” or “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” as if there was another Baptism after your Sacraments of Initiation. Confirmation is already the Catholic Church’s official prayer for the Holy Spirit to empower a person to live the Gospel life by sharing more fully in the mission of Christ and His Holy Church. This is reflected in the Rite of Confirmation:

“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.”



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