

Confirmation: christianity and holy spirit

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Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments through which Catholics pass in the process of their religious upbringing. According to Catholic doctrine, in this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit and become adult members of the Catholic Church. Confirmation is a rite of initiation in Christian churches, normally carried out through anointing, the laying on of hands, and prayer, for the purpose of bestowing the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:[1] Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the Spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received'. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your heart.[2] Most Catholics believe that Confirmation is based on Biblical precedent such as Acts of the Apostles 8: 14-17:[citation needed] 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 baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

----- Scriptural foundation The roots of confirmation are found in the New Testament. For instance, in the Acts of the Apostles 8: 14—17: 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 baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the

holy Spirit. Also, in the Gospel of John, Chapter 14, Christ speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (John 14: 15—26). Later, after his Resurrection, Jesus breathed upon them and they received the Holy Spirit (John 20: 22), a process completed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1—4). After this point, the New Testament records the apostles bestowing the Holy Spirit upon others through the laying on of hands. In the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, Confirmation, known also as Chrismation,[5] is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ for the conferral of sanctifying grace and the strengthening of the union between individual souls and God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church in its paragraphs 1302—1303 states: It is evident from its celebration that the 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. From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace: * it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, " Abba! Father!" (Romans 8: 15); * it unites us more firmly to Christ; * it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us; * it renders our bond with the Church more perfect; * 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: Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts. Effects of confirmation The

Roman Catholic Church and some Anglo-Catholics teach that, like baptism, confirmation marks the recipient permanently, making it impossible to receive the sacrament twice. It accepts as valid a confirmation conferred within churches, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church, whose Holy Orders it sees as valid through the apostolic succession of their bishops. But it considers it necessary to administer the sacrament of confirmation, in its view for the only time, to Protestants who are admitted to full communion with the Catholic Church. One of the effects of the sacrament is that " 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" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1303).[24] This effect has been described as making the confirmed person " a soldier of Christ".[25] The same passage of the Catechism of the Catholic Church also mentions, as an effect of confirmation, that " it renders our bond with the Church more perfect". This mention stresses the importance of participation in the Christian community. The " soldier of Christ" imagery was used, as far back as 350, by St Cyril of Jerusalem.[26] In this connection, the touch on the cheek that the bishop gave while saying " Pax tecum" (Peace be with you) to the person he had just confirmed was interpreted in the Roman Pontifical as a slap, a reminder to be brave in spreading and defending the faith: " Deinde leviter eum in maxilla caedit, dicens: Pax tecum" (Then he strikes him lightly on the cheek, saying: Peace be with you). When, in application of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,[27] the confirmation rite was revised in 1971, mention of this gesture was omitted. However, the French

and Italian translations, indicating that the bishop should accompany the words "Peace be with you" with "a friendly gesture" (French text) or "the sign of peace" (Italian text), explicitly allow a gesture such as the touch on the cheek, to which they restore its original meaning. This is in accord with the Introduction to the Rite of Confirmation, 17, which indicates that the episcopal conference may decide "to introduce a different manner for the minister to give the sign of peace after the anointing, either to each individual or to all the newly confirmed together."

----- Orthodox views Main article:

Chrismation The Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches refer to this sacrament (or, more properly, Sacred Mystery) as Chrismation, a term which Roman Catholics also use; for instance, in Italian the term is *cresima*. Eastern Christians link Chrismation closely with the Sacred Mystery of Baptism, conferring it immediately after baptism, which is normally on infants. The Sacred Tradition of the Orthodox Church teaches that the Apostles themselves established the practice of anointing with chrism in place of the laying on of hands when bestowing the sacrament. As the numbers of converts grew, it became physically impossible for the apostles to lay hands upon each of the newly baptized. So the Apostles laid hands upon a vessel of oil, bestowing the Holy Spirit upon it, which was then distributed to all of the presbyters (priests) for their use when they baptized.[31] This same chrism is in use to this day, never being completely depleted but newly consecrated chrism only being added to it as needed (this consecration traditionally is performed only by the primates of certain autocephalous churches on Great Thursday) and it is

believed that chrism in use today contains some small amount of the original chrism made by the apostles. When Roman Catholics (and some Protestants) convert to Orthodoxy, they are often admitted by Chrismation, without baptism; but, since this is a matter of local episcopal discretion, a bishop may require all converts to be admitted by baptism if he deems it necessary. Depending upon the form of the original baptism, some Protestants must be baptized upon conversion to Orthodoxy. A common practice is that those persons who have been previously baptized by triple immersion in the name of the Trinity do not need to be baptized. However, requirements will differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and some traditional Orthodox jurisdictions prefer to baptize all converts. When a person is received into the church, whether by Baptism or Chrismation, they will often take the name of a saint, who will become their patron saint. Thenceforward, the feast day of that saint will be celebrated as the convert's name day, which in traditional Orthodox cultures is celebrated in lieu of one's birthday. The Orthodox rite of Chrismation takes place immediately after baptism and clothing the "newly illumined" (i. e., newly baptized) in their baptismal robe. The priest makes the sign of the cross with the chrism (also referred to as Myrrh) on the brow, eyes, nostrils, lips, both ears, breast, hands and feet of the newly illumined, saying with each anointing: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Then the priest will place his epitrachelion (stole) over the newly illumined and leads them and their sponsors in a procession, circling three times around the Gospel Book, while the choir chants each time: "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia" (Galatians 3: 27). The reason the Eastern Churches perform Chrismation immediately after

Baptism is so that the newly baptized may receive Holy Communion, which is commonly given to infants as well as adults. An individual may be baptized in extremis (in a life-threatening emergency) by any baptized member of the church; however, only a priest or bishop may perform the Mystery of Chrismation. If someone who has been baptized in extremis survives, the priest then performs the Chrismation. The Roman Catholic Church does not confirm converts to Catholicism who have been Chrismated in an Eastern church, considering that the sacrament has been validly conferred and may not be repeated. In the Eastern Orthodox Church the sacrament may be conferred more than once and it is customary to receive apostates by repeating Chrismation.

----- History The Sacrament of Confirmation is a striking instance of the development of doctrine and ritual in the Church.

We can, indeed, detect much more than the mere germs of it in Holy Scripture; but we must not expect to find there an exact description of the ceremony as at present performed, or a complete solution of the various theological questions which have since arisen. It is only from the Fathers and the Schoolmen that we can gather information on these heads. ----- Confirmation in the Bible We read

in the Acts of the Apostles (8: 14-17) that after the Samaritan converts had been baptized by Philip the deacon, the Apostles " sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for he was not yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost". Again (19: 1-6):

St. Paul " came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples; and he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In what then were you baptized? Who said: In John's baptism. Then Paul said: John baptized the people with the baptism of penance . . . Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied". From these two passages we learn that in the earliest ages of the Church there was a rite, distinct from baptism, in which the Holy Ghost was conferred by the imposition of hands (*dia tes epitheseos ton cheiron ton Apostolon*), and that the power to perform this ceremony was not implied in the power to baptize. No distinct mention is made as to the origin of this rite; but Christ promised the gift of the Holy Ghost and conferred it. Again, no express mention is made of anointing with chrism; but we note that the idea of unction is commonly associated with the giving of the Holy Ghost. Christ (Luke 4: 18) applies to Himself the words of Isaias (61: 1): " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel". St. Peter (Acts 10: 38) speaks of " Jesus of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Ghost". St. John tells the faithful: " You have the unction (*chrisma*) from the Holy One, and know all things"; and again: " Let the unction [*chrisma*], which you have received from him, abide in you" (1 John 2: 20-27). A striking passage, which was made much use of by the Fathers and the Schoolmen, is that of St. Paul: " He that confirmeth [*ho de bebaion*] us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who also hath sealed [*sphragisamenos*] us,

and given us the pledge [arrabona] of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1: 20-21). No mention is made of any particular words accompanying the imposition of hands on either of the occasions on which the ceremony is described; but as the act of imposing hands was performed for various purposes, some prayer indicating the special purpose may have been used: " Peter and John . . . prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost". Further, such expressions as " signing" and " sealing" may be taken as referring to the character impressed by the sacrament: " You were signed [esphragisthete] with the holy Spirit of promise"; " Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed [esphragisthete] unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 1: 13; 4: 30). See also the passage from Second Corinthians quoted above. Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (6: 1-4) the writer reproaches those whom he addresses for falling back into their primitive imperfect knowledge of Christian truth; " whereas for the time you ought to be masters, you have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God" (Hebrews 5: 12). He exhorts them: " leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation . . . of the doctrine of baptisms, and imposition of hands", and speaks of them as those who have been " once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost". It is clear that reference is made here to the ceremony of Christian initiation: baptism and the imposition of hands whereby the Holy Ghost was conferred, just as in Acts 2: 38. The ceremony is considered to be so well known to the faithful that no further description is necessary. This account of the practice and teaching of

the Apostles proved that the ceremony was no mere examination of those already baptized, no mere profession of faith or renewal of baptismal vows. Nor was it something specially conferred upon the Samaritans and Ephesians. What was done to them was an instance of what was generally bestowed. Nor was it a mere bestowal of charismata; the Holy Ghost sometimes produced extraordinary effects (speaking with divers tongues, etc.), but these were not necessarily the result of His being given. The practice and teaching of the Church at the present day preserve the primitive type: the imposition of hands, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the privileges of the episcopate. What further elements were handed down by tradition will be seen presently. ----- Age for Confirmation In the early Church, through the Middle Ages, confirmation was closely linked with baptism and it was often performed on infants before their first birthday.[4] Like baptism, confirmation was an act for which the parents were held responsible. Two synods held in England during the thirteenth century differed over whether confirmation had to be administered within one year after birth, or within three years.[5] Confirmation became a much more important rite when concerns about understanding and faith grew, in particular following the Reformation.[6] The age of discretion, also known as the age of reason, is defined by the Church as: " The name given to that period of human life at which persons are deemed to begin to be morally responsible." Children have always been admitted to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion around age seven. But, when it comes to Confirmation, the law gives great latitude to bishops, who are free to determine that a later age is more suitable for the reception of the

sacrament. After the Second Vatican Council, the trend has been for Catholics to receive Confirmation later, between the sixth and the tenth grade.