

## Jesus Promises to Send the Holy Spirit (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year A)

### Acts 8:5-8, 14-17—Peter, John, and the Origins of Confirmation

1. Philip: one of the deacons ordained earlier (cf. Acts 6:5)
2. Peter and John: Why are they sent to Samaria?
  - a. Because they are “apostles” (Greek *apostolos*)
  - b. To “Lay Hands” upon the new believers
  - c. So they might receive “the Holy Spirit”
3. Origins of Confirmation: “completes the grace of baptism” (CCC 1288, 1315)

### Psalm 66—Let all the Earth Cry Out to God with Joy

1. A Psalm of praise for all the powerful “deeds” he has done

### 1 Peter 3:15-18—Always Be Ready to Give an Explanation for Your Hope

1. Always be prepared to make a “defense” or “explanation” (Greek *apologia*)
2. However, do it with “gentleness” and “reverence”

### John 14:15-21—The Father Will Send Another “Advocate”

1. Jesus Promises another “Counselor” or “Advocate” (Greek *paraklētos*)
  - a. What is a Paraclete?
  - b. *para*: “beside”
  - c. *kaleō*: “to call”
  - d. Meaning: “He who is called to one’s side”
2. The “Spirit of Truth”: will be different from Jesus
  - a. “Spirit” = Greek *pneuma*, meaning “spirit,” “breath,” or “wind”
  - b. Invisible: “it neither sees him”
  - b. Indwelling: “he dwells *with* you and will be *in* you”
3. I will not leave you desolate”: literally, “orphans” (Greek *orphanos*)

### The Catechism on Jesus and the Promise of the Holy Spirit

When he proclaims and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls him the “Paraclete,” literally, “he who is called to one’s side,” *ad-vocatus* (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). “Paraclete” is commonly translated by “consoler,” and Jesus is the first consoler (cf. 1 John 2:1). The Lord also called the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth” (John 16:13). (CCC 692)

### The Western Practice of being Confirmed by the Bishop

The practice of the Eastern Churches gives greater emphasis to the unity of Christian initiation. That of the Latin Church more clearly expresses the communion of the new Christian with the bishop as guarantor and servant of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of his Church, and hence the connection with the apostolic origins of Christ’s

Church. (CCC 1291)

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. What do you think about the origins of confirmation in Acts 8? What light does it shed on the different duties of the apostles (Peter and John) and the deacons (represented by Philip)?

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2. What do you make of Jesus' promise to send us the "Paraclete"? Do you think of the Holy Spirit as an "Advocate"? In light of this title, what role should the Holy Spirit play in our spiritual lives?

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3. What was your own experience of Confirmation? Have you ever wondered about the biblical roots of this sacrament? Take some time to read through the *Catechism's* section on Confirmation (CCC 1285-1321), highlighting any passages that might shed fresh light on this often misunderstood sacrament.

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### For Further Study

1. CCC 1285-1321: the Church's official teaching on the sacrament of Confirmation. A must read for contemporary Catholics.
2. CCC 683-747: the Church's official teaching on the person of the Holy Spirit. A must read for anyone who wants to better understand the person of the "Advocate."
3. Scott Hahn, *Swear to God: The Promise and Power of the Sacraments* (Doubleday, 2003). A great introduction to the Sacraments as "powers flowing forth from the side of Christ," connected in a particular way to the covenants.