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**IMPRIMATUR**

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# The Sacrament of Confirmation

## RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT



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### JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Throughout his life and in his words, Jesus revealed who the Spirit of God is. Although the prophets and kings occasionally refused to follow the Spirit's guidance, Jesus never did. He always spoke by the Spirit and never acted outside the will of the Spirit. John says that the Spirit was with Jesus at all times.

Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit overshadowed Mary to enable her to give birth to a son. The angel said to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Luke 1:35).

The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus during his baptism in the Jordan: "and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove" (Luke 3:22).

The same Spirit led Jesus to the desert to fight the three great temptations that tempt every person. These are the temptations to turn to power, to greed, and to self-satisfaction, rather than trusting in God.

"Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was the victor.

Before entering into his Passion and Death, Jesus announced to his disciples that he would not leave them alone. He would send them a defender. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).

### THE APOSTLES AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fifty days after Easter, (also on the Jewish feast of Pentecost), the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. They were empowered to announce that Jesus, who was crucified, was risen, and was living again.

### Pentecost

*"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled "And the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim ... at this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, 'Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?'" (Acts 2:1-8).*

## FIRE

In the Bible, fire illuminates, warms, and ignites. It also purifies things such as precious metals. The Spirit is a fire that cleanses and renews us from the inside.

John the Baptist says of Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire” (Matthew 3:11).

The promise is fulfilled at Pentecost: “Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:3–4).

## WATER, THE REFRESHING SOURCE

Water is the symbol of life, and the Spirit is the one who brings life to us. The Spirit is like water, preventing our hearts from drying up and hardening, but we need to allow the Spirit to create channels within us so that we can grow with strength. Finally, the Spirit is the water that allows us to bear fruit like a tree. God says, “I will pour out water upon the thirsty

ground, streams upon the dry land; I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring...” (Isaiah 44:3).

Jesus said, “Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him’” (John 7:37–39).

## Advocate or Paraclete

**Paraclete** comes from the Greek **paracletos** which means “lawyer.” The *paraclete* is the one who asks, prays, consoles, encourages, and defends. The Holy Spirit that Jesus promises to send to his disciples is really a person, not just a force. The Spirit acts for us, consoles us, and defends us against enemies, and at the same time helps us act according to the will of Jesus Christ.

Jesus says: “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you” (John 14:26).

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26–27).





# The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In the Church's tradition, the Holy Spirit gives seven gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord\*. The number seven symbolizes totality, but the list of the seven gifts is not final! When we receive the Spirit, we are filled with these gifts, but that does not mean that we have them once and for all. Rather, they are areas in which we are invited to keep improving all our life.

## WHERE DO THESE SEVEN GIFTS COME FROM?

In the Old Testament, in a passage from the Book of Isaiah, it is written, "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:1-3). In rereading this text, Christians attributed these gifts to Jesus Christ, the Messiah expected by Israelites, and finally, to the Holy Spirit.

## WHAT ARE THE GIFTS FOR?

As all gifts are free, the Gifts of the Spirit are freely offered to us so that we can become closer to God. In his Epistles (letters), Saint Paul speaks of these spiritual gifts: to serve, teach, encourage, direct, sympathize, evangelize... When we receive the Holy Spirit, each of us is filled with gifts, not to keep for ourselves, but to use for others. When we exercise these gifts, the Spirit acts through us, to enrich the Church and transform the world.

\* The fear of the Lord is a feeling of respect for the greatness of God that goes beyond our imagination. When we fear God, we want to be faithful in all areas of our life.



In this traditional image of Jesse's tree, a tree representing his offspring comes out of Jesse's chest. It culminates with Mary and Jesus. Around them, we find the great kings of Israel. Sometimes these kings are replaced by the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## The Holy Spirit leads us to love and forgiveness

*The most precious gift that the Spirit gives us is love. Saint Paul places it above all the other gifts and charisms. He calls this love “charity.” God loves us with this kind of love so that we are able to love ourselves and others. It is like a torrent of water that cannot be restrained; it goes through us and over us.*

### THE SPIRIT IS LOVE

The Bible explains that the Holy Spirit and the love of God are linked: “The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

“If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:12–13).

We can also rely on the testimony of those who have experience the Spirit in their lives: they say they felt that they are deeply loved by God. And that gives them a lot of joy and peace.

### THE SPIRIT MAKES US LOVE

The Spirit communicates to our soul that God loves us. If we know that we are loved by God, we can not keep this love for ourselves. The Holy Spirit awakens the love of God and of our neighbor in our heart and teaches us how to love. The Spirit pushes us out of our selfishness so that we can forgive what is difficult to forgive and battle injustice. John says, “As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, so that you do not need anyone to teach you. But his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and not false; just as it taught you, remain in him” (1 John 2:27). So when we fail to love or forgive, we can always ask the Holy Spirit to help us by instilling in us the desire to love and forgive.





**THE CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION  
INCLUDES FOUR HIGHLIGHTS:**

► **The call**

Each confirmand (person being confirmed) is called by the bishop by his or her name. The person responds by standing up or moving forward. This shows a personal desire to receive the sacrament.

► **The profession of faith**

Confirmands reaffirm the faith of the Church

as their parents did for them when they were little children. They answer “I do” to each question the bishop asks.

► **The laying on of hands**

The bishop and any concelebrating priests lay hands on those who will be confirmed in order for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. The bishop says a prayer that mentions the Seven Gifts of the Spirit that the confirmands will receive: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

► **The anointing with Sacred Chrism**

The bishop makes a cross with Sacred Chrism (holy oil) on the forehead of the confirmand. He says, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.” The confirmand responds “Amen.” This oil penetrates the skin and signifies how the Holy Spirit enters the heart of the Christian to dwell there.

**Sacred Chrism**

*Sacred Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balm, which has a very pleasant fragrance. It represents how the Holy Spirit enters the life of the Christian so that the joy and peace of the Lord can be seen and felt. The baptized and the confirmed are called to be “the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15). This oil is consecrated by the bishop during the Chrism Mass that takes place once a year, during Holy Week.*



## How do you live according to the Spirit?

*You have just been confirmed or you will soon be confirmed. You are called to change the way you live. You have received the Spirit of God, not to keep this gift for yourself, but so that your life can be transformed, so that it can radiate the love of God. But what does it mean to live according to the Spirit?*

In the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul compares the life according to the Spirit to the life according to the flesh. "To live according to the flesh" means to live for oneself. When we live by the Spirit, we try to follow Jesus Christ. A life lived according to the Spirit, bears fruits: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22).

### HOW DO WE PRAY?

To live by the Spirit is to let Christ guide our lives. But how can this happen if we do not have a personal and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit? This relationship or friendship is built in prayer. But how do we pray? Even the

disciples wondered this: "Master, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Praying can be a moment very early in the morning, or later in the evening before bedtime, or anytime during the day. When you pray, simply acknowledge your desire to meet God. There is no need to plan what you will say or ask. Be open to any surprise, without wishing to direct your prayer. After that, ask to the Holy Spirit to give you the words to pray. Saint Paul knows how difficult it is to pray, but he also assures us that the Spirit comes to our aid (see Romans 8:26).

If you do not feel ready to pray, or if you run out of time, you can also "recite" a prayer you



know, such as the Our Father or Hail Mary. Or, like the Eastern Christians, you can repeat in your heart this simple prayer: "Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

### ARE YOU THIRSTY?

Jesus said to the crowds, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink." (John 7:37). And

John added, "He said this in reference to the Spirit" (John 7:39). Thus, ask yourself these questions: Do I want to progress in the faith? Do I have a desire to meet Jesus, to become closer to him? If you do not feel this need, ask to the Spirit to create this thirst in you.