



VENI  
SANCTE  
SPIRITUS  
A GUIDE TO CONFIRMATION

## WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

**SANCTIFYING GRACE:**  
Sometimes called habitual grace, it is the life of God given that perfects our soul for heaven. In Baptism we receive this grace, through mortal sin we reject it. Reconciliation restores it, and the other sacraments increase it within us.

Road signs are extremely important, without them we would not know where we were going, how fast we should be driving, or know when to STOP! These signs are pretty effective at telling people how they should proceed but what would it be like if they were efficacious? What if the signs actually caused the reality they were meant to signify? Rather than signaling you to stop, a stop sign would actually cause your car to stop. This is what the sacraments do for us. They are efficacious signs instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which divine life (grace) is dispensed to us. This is a fancy way of saying that the sacraments actually do what they symbolize. Jesus decided to institute seven sacraments whereby we can encounter him, be strengthened by him, and reach salvation through him. They are indispensable but often taken for granted or misunderstood. I think there is a grave misconception among many Catholics about the Sacrament of Confirmation. Some think that Confirmation is a rite of passage to becoming an adult in the Church or about making a choice of faith. Unfortunately both of those ideas fall short of the beauty of what Confirmation is really all about. Like all of the sacraments, Confirmation is an encounter with Jesus where he dispenses grace (**sanctifying grace** to be specific). So rather than you “confirming” your “adult faith” Jesus is confirming, or strengthening, his Holy Spirit given you at Baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says it this way:

[Confirmation]  
imprints on the soul  
an *indelible spiritual  
mark*, the "character,"  
which is the sign that  
Jesus Christ has  
marked a Christian  
with the seal of his  
Spirit by clothing him  
with power from on  
high so that he may be  
his witness.  
(CCC 1304)





Although all sacraments are efficacious, we can prevent the fruits of the sacrament from bearing in our own lives. When I was in middle school my uncle gave me a guitar, but

that did not make me a guitarist. I actually did not learn to play until my senior year in high school. In the meantime my guitar just sat in my closet collecting dust. So many times we receive the gifts that God gives us in the sacraments with closed hearts, sin, or indifference and we are unable to reap the benefits of the grace received. That is what the process of preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation is all about. It is about helping you understand what God desires to give you in the sacrament and to help you reach an openness and docility to the Holy Spirit. But as it is with all things, what you put into it is what you will get out of it. If the desire to receive the grace of God is not within you then attending any confirmation preparation would be like attending driver's education classes, passing your driver's test, receiving a free car and never taking it out for a drive.

Confirmation preparation in our parish is designed specifically with your spirituality in mind, in order to bring about opportunities for you to open your heart to the

love of God. Our goal is to provide opportunities in education, retreats, service, and liturgy where you can encounter Christ, in a real way, leading you to open your heart to him so you will be ready and willing to be transformed by the grace received through the sacrament.



## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION?

When my first born son was born I immediately knew I was given a special gift. Joel was born 10 weeks early, weighed 3.3lbs, and spent 53 days in the NICU. My heart melted when I first held his tiny hand; I did not know I had this much love to give. Although we got little sleep while he was in the hospital (and less when he came home) we still had the energy and desire to love him and properly take care of him. Since he entered into the world so unexpectedly there was a lot of work to be done before our home would be ready to receive him. When he finally came home his presence brought my wife and I closer and taught us what real love, God's love, is all about. The gift of our first-born brought out another grace in our lives, something called **actual grace**, leading us to love and sacrifice more deeply than we thought possible. The gift Jesus gives you through Confirmation is much like the gifts my wife and I experienced with Joel.



Jesus promised to give us his Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16) and through Confirmation we receive him and his gifts. These gifts are listed in Isaiah 11:2 and are listed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1831) as:

- Wisdom
- Understanding
- Knowledge
- Courage (sometimes called Fortitude)
- Right Judgment (sometimes called Council)
- Reverence (sometimes called Piety)
- Wonder and Awe (sometimes called the Fear of the Lord).

**ACTUAL GRACE:** is a supernatural help of God which enlightens our mind and strengthens our will to do good and to avoid evil.





These gifts strengthen us to be “witnesses of Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith” and they bind us “more perfectly to the Church” (Can 879). In our modern world where our faith is constantly attacked, misjudged, or

looked down upon it is important that we receive this grace to be able to boldly stand up for our faith. It is hard to live the faith on our own especially because sometimes we are sinful and ignorant but when we receive Christ’s Spirit in the sacrament we can unashamedly cry, “Abba! Father!” avoid sin and do good in our lives, and never be ashamed of the Cross. This turns our lives into a true witness of faith (CCC 1303). With Christ’s Spirit within us we need not be afraid. When Joel was born my wife and I found strength we did not know we had, likewise when you openly receive the Spirit of God you will have strength for his will like you had not known before. Throughout scripture when people encountered Christ with open hearts they were changed and strengthened but if they approached him with closed hearts they walked away empty, angry, and some even sought to kill him.

### HOW DO I PREPARE MY HEART TO RECEIVE THIS GIFT?

Before we undergo any journey we need to make the necessary preparations to ensure we are ready. We make sure we have enough money for food, lodging, gas, appropriate clothes for where we are headed, and we plot out how to get there. Christ bestowed his Holy

Spirit upon the Church and entrusted her to guide his people to himself. In her wisdom she has drawn a road map to help you open your heart to encounter Christ prior to receiving the sacrament. **The Code of Canon Law** says to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation you must be baptized and “suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises” (Can 889 §1-§2).

**THE CODE OF CANON LAW:** the body of laws and regulations made by or adopted by ecclesiastical authority, for the government of the Christian organization and its members.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church adds that you must receive the sacrament of Penance, be in a state of grace, and you must prepare through “more intense prayer” to receive the Holy Spirit with “docility and readiness to act” (CCC 1310). This is the road map for the universal Church; the bishops in each diocese use these directives to make a more specific map that will work for the flock they shepherd. If we look at the separate parts of the Church’s universal map we can see how our parish guidelines match up.



The first step most candidates think about is to be “suitably instructed,” for our Diocese this means that everyone must attend Faith Formation Classes for at least 2 years with regular attendance. During these classes you will learn the core beliefs of our faith in the Creed and baptismal promises so that when you receive the strength of the Holy Spirit you will have the desire and ability to stand for what we believe. You will also come to know the truths handed to us from Christ through his Church.

At our parish regular attendance means that any one candidate should not miss more than 4 classes to complete a full year, but absences can be reconciled by attending a Sunday Youth Group. This of course does not mean that you will know everything there is to know about the faith. We are all still growing in knowledge and in relationship with God and since he is infinite we will not exhaust that journey until we meet him in heaven.

The call to be “properly disposed” and the call to “more intense prayer” are sometimes secondary thoughts to candidates but are the most important parts of your preparation. The proper disposition to receive the Holy Spirit is docility and readiness to act. Docility is that attitude of openness to the promptings and teachings of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will guide you in “all truth” (Jn 16:13) but it is possible to hear the truth and ignore it because of a closed heart (Mt 13:22). The readiness to act upon the promptings of the Holy Spirit is the desire to do the will of God. Ultimately there is no program that will give you the openness and desire to act but at our parish we have created opportunities that can foster openness and desire for the Holy Spirit during your preparation.

Before Jesus undertook his mission he spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying (Mt 4:1-11). During both years of your preparation you will attend a retreat that will give you the opportunity to pray more intensely and be more open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. These retreats give you an opportunity to step back in your life and consciously seek to find God's hand guiding you and learn

to recognize his call. There is also a service component to your preparation (minimum 15 hours). Jesus tells us that when we serve the needs of the poor and marginalized we are serving him (Mt 25:31-40). You are welcome to put together your own service projects or participate in the service opportunities we offer here at the parish but keep in mind that the service component is not just a checkmark on a list of things to do, but an opportunity for you to see the face of Christ in your service to the world and be a witness of Christian love to those you serve.

As Catholics we are obligated to attend Sunday Mass every week and on Holy Days of obligation. Your Mass attendance is the most important aspect of your preparation. Jesus is present to you most intimately in the Holy Sacrifice on the Altar: the Holy Eucharist. It is



vitally important that you participate fully, actively, and consciously at Mass to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist with new ardor during your preparation. Because this aspect of your preparation is so important we provide Mass Attendance Sheets for you to complete each time you attend Mass. Simply drop these sheets in the collection basket during the Preparation of the Gifts. If you happen to attend a different parish on any given week pick up a bulletin

from that parish. Take that bulletin to your next Confirmation preparation class, write your name on it, and give it to your catechist.



Throughout the year we offer Reconciliation services to give you opportunities to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation in addition to the retreats and regular parish times. Before you receive Confirmation you must be in a **state of grace**. Be sure that if you commit a mortal sin

**STATE OF GRACE:**

Condition of a person who is free from mortal sin and pleasing to God. It is the state of being in God's friendship and the necessary condition of the soul at death in order to attain heaven.

after receiving absolution you take additional steps to seek out a priest and make a good confession before you receive the sacrament. The stain of mortal sin on our souls shatters our relationship with God and makes it impossible for us to openly receive the grace he desires to give us. As a reminder a mortal sin is any sin that is of serious or grave matter (perhaps you broke one of the 10 Commandments), you knew it was wrong, and you

gave free consent of your will to the act (CCC 1857). Any serious sin that you know is wrong but choose to do anyway is a mortal sin and needs to be confessed in the sacrament. Scripture tells us that if we confess our sins Jesus “is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing” (1 Jn 1:9) but if we leave mortal sins unconfessed they are retained in this world and we place our salvation in jeopardy (Jn 20:23).

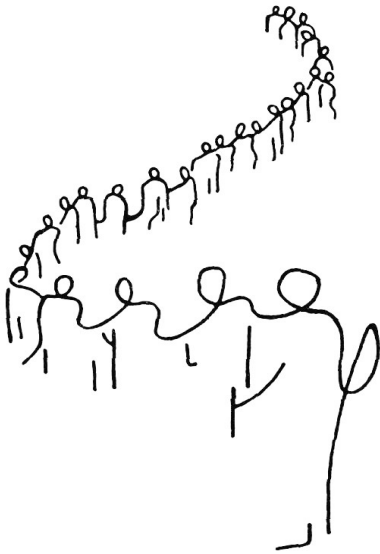
THIS SEEMS LIKE A LOT, WILL I HAVE HELP ALONG THE WAY?

In his great wisdom Jesus established the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church on the foundation of Peter, our first Pope, so that we as Christians would not have to make this journey of faith alone (Mt 16:18).

During your sacramental preparation there are a variety of people who will help you including your parents, your catechists, your youth minister, your priests, your sponsors, and the whole communion of saints in heaven. From all these people who help you through your journey you choose two of them: your sponsor and a saint. There are many people on earth and in heaven who are praying for your preparation to receive the grace of this sacrament and there will be many people in heaven and on earth who will rejoice when you receive the grace of the sacrament.







As you prepare it is beneficial to have a few people walk close with you during your journey to help you answer any questions you may have and to pray for your needs and struggles along the way. Your sponsor and saint's name that you choose will be those people for you. Your sponsor is someone you choose, with the help of your parents, who is a great example of the Catholic life, someone who has received all of the sacraments of initiation and who can show you what it is like to live as a witness to the Gospel in both word and deed (CCC 1303). The Code of Canon Law helps us understand what we should seek in a sponsor as well as the roles and requirements that are involved in being a sponsor:

“The sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.” (Can 892)

To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1. be appointed by the candidate or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;
2. be no less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;
3. be a Baptized Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
4. not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared (meaning that someone who is not married within the Church, has committed heresy, or is opposed to the Church's teaching on the dignity of life cannot serve as sponsor);
5. not be the father or the mother of the person to be confirmed. (Can 874 §1)

The saint name that you have the option of choosing during Confirmation is a tradition going back at least as far as St. Charles Borromeo in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, taking on a new name when given a special mission and call from God goes back to Abraham in the Old Testament book called Genesis. Throughout scripture when someone was anointed for special mission from God or entered into a sacred covenant with God he would often give them a new name. Abram and Sarai become Abraham and Sarah (Gn 17:5 & 15), Jacob is renamed Israel (Gn 32:29), and Simon becomes Peter (Mt 16:18).



At your Confirmation Jesus seals you with his Holy Spirit and anoints you in order to accomplish the works of God (Jn 14:12). It is appropriate at this time, if you wish, to choose the name of a saint whom you admire for their life and witness to the Gospel. Often we choose a saint's name with whom we have something in common and would like to emulate, but not every candidate chooses a saint's name. Whichever saint's name you choose it is important that you ask him/her to pray for you as you journey through life. Scripture tells us that God hears the prayers of the saints and that the saints are constantly interceding for us (Rev 5:8). Who better to pray for you and with you than someone who is already in heaven?

**HELLO**  
my name is

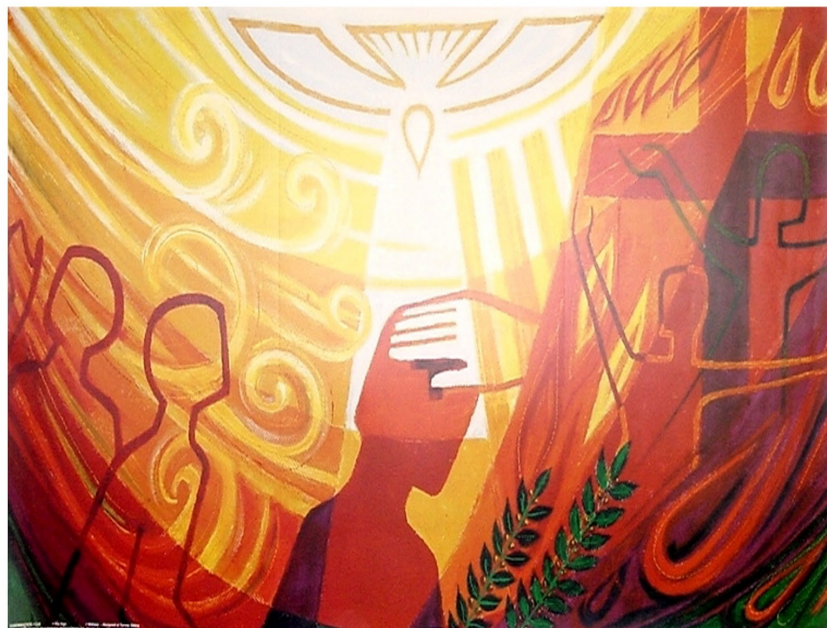
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## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION?

If you met me before I received Confirmation you would not have pictured me doing anything with or for the Church. I knew a lot about Catholicism but I was not exactly an enthusiastic Catholic. I knew Confirmation was important and I received it with an open heart and something inside of me changed. One day while sitting in the church pew I heard an announcement that they were looking for members to join the teen choir and something within me said that it might be fun. I joined the choir and then joined youth group. It was not long before my youth minister called me to help lead youth group and by seventeen I was spending all my free time helping at the Church or caring for the poor. I felt the Holy Spirit prompting me to do something. I decided to listen to his prompting and would not change a single minute of my journey with our Lord in his Church. If you receive the sacrament with docility you will hear the invitation to do God's will differently. Perhaps you have been invited to youth group before, or to serve at a soup kitchen, or to join another one of the ministries in the Church. The Spirit manifested itself within me by allowing me to hear these invitations anew.

The grace in the sacrament of Confirmation gave me the strength and courage to step out and say YES to the promptings of God. I guess the most exciting part about Confirmation is what happens afterwards. Exciting, because if you are open to God's call and are willing to act upon it, through you he will renew the face of the Earth! Don't get frustrated if you don't sense the Holy Spirit prompting you right away. As long as you keep your eyes, ears, mind, and heart prayerfully opened that is all you need for the Spirit to work within you. You are never alone in your journey. Remember to look to Jesus and you will find what you are seeking.

Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful  
and kindle in them the fire of  
your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and  
they shall be created. And  
You shall renew the face of  
the earth.  
Amen!



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