

The Sacrament of Confirmation

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<http://www.fargodiocese.org/files/pdf/catechesis/Sac%20of%20Confirmation%20booklet%202013.pdf>*

What is the Sacrament of Confirmation?

Confirmation is the sacrament that deepens and strengthens the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us in our Baptism. It is one of the sacraments of initiation that makes us full members of the Church. When you first brought your child to receive the sacrament of Baptism you heard the words of the priest, "Dearly beloved, these children have been reborn in baptism. They are now called children of God. In Confirmation they will receive the fullness of God's Spirit. In Holy Communion they will share the banquet of Christ's sacrifice." You now fulfill those words as you bring your child for Confirmation.

We received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. In the gift of Confirmation, those gifts of the Holy Spirit are intensified to bring us to holiness; in the Eucharist we are given the gift of the Body and Blood of Jesus to nourish us as we journey through this life. The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist complete our initiation into becoming full members of Christ Church.

The Passion, Death, Resurrection

We remember the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus during the Holy Triduum, which ends the season of Lent. During the Last Supper, Jesus turned the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood. This mystery continued to unfold the next day with the death of Jesus, as he offers himself up for crucifixion. The third day was the climax of the whole event: Jesus was raised from the dead! Jesus spent 40 days with His apostles teaching them to bring the Gospel message to all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But the story did not end there. Jesus said to His apostles before ascending into heaven that the Advocate would come. The Advocate is the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. It was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit comes upon the Church.

Your child may not completely understand why Jesus had to suffer and die for us, but you can help your child see that it is out of love that He offered to suffer and die for us so that we can be with God in heaven for ever. This was the only way that the gates of heaven could be open for us. This is the greatest act of love there is. Jesus did not abandon us; God has sent us the Holy Spirit to be with us always.

The Story of Pentecost

Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples after the Resurrection. Jesus told his disciples that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. After He ascended into heaven, the apostles returned to Jerusalem to the upper room and with Mary, the mother of Jesus, waited in prayer for the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

The story of Pentecost is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-13) giving us a vivid image of what this amazing event must have been like. It begins by telling us that they were all gathered in one place when suddenly a noise from the sky, like a strong driving wind, filled the entire house! Then there appeared what was like flames of fire that parted and then appeared over each of their heads. They became filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages. There was a large crowd outside who heard the loud rush of wind and came to see what it was. They witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit when they could understand the apostles proclaiming Jesus Christ in their own language. They were astounded! Peter then gave a speech to explain to them what had just happened. He gave to the people a catechesis about Jesus. It is by the gift of the Holy Spirit that the apostles were given the mission to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and to proclaim to the world our salvation through Him. This is the same gift that is given to each one of us in our

Confirmation, young or old, we are called to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to others. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to do this.

Confirmation Received at a Young Age

The age of reception of Confirmation has changed many times through the centuries and again most recently in the last decade. You may wonder how your child is going to use the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation to proclaim Jesus Christ to others just like the apostles did.

Following are examples of saints who were confirmed at a young age.

St. Therese of Lisieux

St. Therese of Lisieux was born January 2, 1873 in a small town in France. Therese was confirmed on June 14, 1884 at the age of 11. She writes in her diary about being prepared with great care to receive the visit of the Holy Spirit and she could not understand why greater attention was not given to this sacrament. She called it the sacrament of love, "having eternally on my forehead the mysterious cross the bishop makes when conferring this sacrament." She also said she was hoping to feel a strong wind, but instead experienced a light breeze like that of the prophet Elijah heard on Mt. Horeb. She also wrote, "on that day I received the strength to suffer." Therese was writing about the strength she received from the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts of fortitude and courage. For when suffering came her way, she stayed strong in her hope and love for Jesus and did not give in to despair or depression.

St. Dominic Savio:

St. Dominic Savio was born April 2, 1842, in Italy. He was confirmed one week after his 12th birthday. Dominic showed great piety as he always prayerfully prepared himself before and after Mass. He would go to the sacrament of Reconciliation often, as he knew how this pleased the Lord. He proclaimed to his teacher that Jesus and Mary were his friends. He loved Jesus and Mary very much and he had a great zeal to share them with his school friends as he said, "If I could win all my schoolmates over to God, how happy I'd be!"

Venerable Antonietta Meo

Venerable Antonietta Meo was born December 15, 1930. She was confirmed when she was 6 years old. Antonietta suffered with the terrible disease of bone cancer so she could not run and play like the other children. She also knew she would not live a long life as the disease got worse. However, even though her body was in pain her spirits were happy and joyful. Antonietta understood the gifts given to her in Confirmation, which she wrote about in letters to the Holy Spirit. Below you will find one she dictated to her mother.

The Saints and the Gift

Even at a young age, these saints used the gifts given to them in Confirmation to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. St. Therese did this in her quiet little way by her small acts of love and charity. St. Dominic had a great zeal to share his love of Jesus and Mary with his friends and Venerable Antonietta, in her suffering, shows us the way to love as Jesus loved us.

Reviewing the Gifts of the Holy Spirit with your Child

Suggestion: Parents lead a discussion with your child to talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For each gift, try to think of examples that show what this looks like in your life when you use each gift.

We first receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. These gifts are strengthened in Confirmation. (cf. Is 11:1-3; CCC 1831). The gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to live as children of God and disciples of Jesus. The gifts complete and perfect the virtues.

Imagine an artist. An artist cannot paint without tools like brushes, a canvas, paints, etc., so too a Christian cannot live as a Christian without the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But owning the tools is still not enough for an artist to be an artist. An artist needs to practice and figure out how to use the tools, so also a Christian cannot be a Christian unless they practice and figure out how to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit take practice to see; they are not as easily seen as an artist's tools. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit is with us always as our interior teacher and guide. We can always ask the Holy Spirit for help. Learning the meaning of each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the start for understanding how to use them in our daily life as a Christian.

Wisdom - first and greatest gift; wisdom is having the ways and thoughts of God, the mind and heart of Jesus Christ; helps us to know as God knows; helps us to love the things of God; helps us to act the way God would wish. Wisdom is the ability to see how all things work together in God's plan of salvation.

Understanding - gift which gives us insight into the truths of faith. Understanding deepens our knowledge of God and the meaning of His teachings and life; a sort of divine intuition.

Counsel (Right Judgment) - gift that helps us to know the right decisions to make in our life, to see and choose correctly what will help most to follow God; helps us to seek advice and follow direction from godly people. Counsel is the gift that points out to us the path God wants us to follow and the dangers to avoid in order to reach heaven; sometimes called "Right Judgment"

Fortitude (Courage) - gift that gives us the strength to live our faith, to live as Jesus calls us to live, to obey the commandments; gives us the courage to love God in the face of all obstacles, even death, and gives us a willingness to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom of God; sometimes called "Courage"

Knowledge - gift which helps us know God, know ourselves and know the value of all created things as God intended.

Piety (Reverence) - gift of having devotion to God; gift that heals our hearts and helps us to open them tenderly towards God and others; helps us to love and worship God; helps us to pray and gives us a deep respect for God, for all of His people and for all of His creation; sometimes called "Reverence".

Fear of the Lord (Wonder and Awe) - gift that helps us recognize the majesty of God (how great He is) and how much we need Him; gives us the desire to avoid anything that would separate us from His love; helps us to pray to God and never lose trust in Him; sometimes called "wonder and awe".

Reviewing the Fruits of the Holy Spirit with your Child

Suggestion: Parents lead a discussion with your child to talk about the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Think of examples that show what this looks like in your child's life when they use each gift.

If you see apples on a tree, what kind of tree is it? What if you see oranges? If the fruits of the Holy Spirit are at work in you, they will show in your behavior and how you treat others. If the fruits aren't obvious, then something needs to change.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit give us a slice of heaven right now on earth. This taste of heaven is given to the individual and everyone that the individual encounters either directly or indirectly. In other words, people who do not know Jesus can come to know Him by meeting someone who is living like Him (as His witness and disciple).

There are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23, CCC 1832). Learning the meaning of each of these will help you see if these fruits are in your life or if you need to work more on developing them. You can pray that the Holy Spirit would help you have more of these fruits.

charity (love) - loving God above all things and loving all other people. Charity is the sign that you love God as your good Father and others as Jesus loves you. Your love is so great that you show selfless service to others by your prayers, words and actions.

joy - interior, unshakeable happiness. Joy is deep and constant gladness in the Lord that cannot be destroyed by other people or things. It comes from a good relationship with God and others, a relationship of genuine love.

peace - not only the absence of fighting and violence, but also an internal presence resulting from a friendship with God and His Family, the Church. Peace comes from knowing that everything will be OK because God is with us. A disciple faithful to God's will is calm, not anxious or upset.

patience - seeing things and waiting in God's time. Patience is love that is willing to endure life's sufferings. It means not giving up when it is hard to act like Jesus. We trust that God is in control and wait for Him.

kindness acting as God acts towards others, forgiving others even when they hurt us. Kindness is showing we care and doing good to others. It is showing Jesus' love to all.

goodness - all the qualities and virtues which make us what God wants us to be. Goodness is a sign that we love all people without exception and do good to them. Goodness comes from God's great love.

generosity - willingness to give all that we have received to God and others. Generosity is giving and sharing without asking or wanting something in return. It finds ways to make others happy.

gentleness - acting towards others with the recognition that you cannot make them follow Jesus, they need to decide for themselves. Gentleness is really strength softened by love so we can be gentle and kind. A gentle person has the power to forgive instead of getting angry.

faithfulness - following Jesus in every way. You are faithful when you show loyalty to God, trusting and obeying Him. Faithful people are dependable; they keep their promises.

modesty - dress or conduct that respects others. Modesty is moderation in all our actions, especially how we dress, talk and behave with others. Modesty is a sign that we give credit to God for our talents and successes.

self-control - temperance, knowing when enough is enough, right control over ones' desire. Self-control means controlling our thoughts, words and actions. We control our emotions and desires instead of letting them control us. We decide to be good.

chastity - purity in thought, word, and act. Chastity helps us to be pure in mind, heart and body. It helps us respect ourselves and others.

Praying the Novena to the Holy Spirit

A novena is nine consecutive days of prayer. The Novena to the Holy Spirit is the oldest of all novenas since it was first made at the direction of Our Lord Himself, when He sent His apostles back to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. In other words, the Twelve Apostles spent nine days praying to prepare for receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. You can do the same thing to prepare with your child for their Confirmation. You might also have their sponsor join in.

Each day of the Novena to the Holy Spirit begins with the prayers for the day, after which are recited the "Our Father", "Hail Mary" and "Glory Be". The prayer concludes with "The Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit" and "The Act of Consecration" (see p. 8).

FIRST DAY - The Holy Spirit

Only one thing is important: eternal salvation. Only one thing, therefore, is to be feared: sin. Sin is the result of ignorance, weakness, and indifference. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of light, of strength, and of love. With His sevenfold gift He enlightens the mind, strengthens the will, and inflames the heart with love of God. To ensure our salvation we ought to invoke the Divine Spirit daily, for "The Spirit helps our infirmity. We know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself asks for us."

Prayer: Almighty and eternal God, Who has allowed us to be regenerated by water and the Holy Spirit, and has given us forgiveness of all sins, grant to send forth from heaven upon us your sevenfold gift, the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding, the gifts of Counsel and Fortitude, the gifts of Knowledge and Piety, and fill us with the gift of Holy Fear. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

SECOND DAY - The Gift of Wisdom

Embodying all the other gifts, as charity embraces all the other virtues, Wisdom is the most perfect of the gifts. Of Wisdom it is written "all good things came to me with her, and innumerable riches through her hands." It is the gift of Wisdom that strengthens our faith, fortifies hope, perfects charity, and promotes the practice of virtue in the highest degree. Wisdom enlightens the mind to discern and relish things divine, in the appreciation of which earthly joys lose their savor, while the Cross of Christ yields a divine sweetness according to the words of the Savior: "Take up your cross and follow me, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light".

Prayer: Come, O Spirit of Wisdom, and reveal to my soul the mysteries of heavenly things, their exceeding greatness, power and beauty. Teach me to love them above and beyond all the passing joys and satisfactions of earth. Help me to attain them and possess them for ever. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

THIRD DAY - The Gift of Understanding

Understanding, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, helps us to grasp the meaning of the truths of our holy religion. By faith we know them, but by Understanding we learn to appreciate and relish them. It enables us to penetrate the inner meaning of revealed truths and through them to be quickened to newness of life. Our faith ceases to be sterile and inactive, but inspires a mode of life that bears

eloquent testimony to the faith that is in us; we begin to "walk worthy of God in all things pleasing, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Prayer: Come, O Spirit of Understanding, and enlighten our minds, that we may know and believe all the mysteries of salvation; and may merit at last to see the eternal light in Your Light; and in the light of glory to have a clear vision of You, Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

FOURTH DAY - The Gift of Counsel

The gift of Counsel endows the soul with supernatural prudence, enabling it to judge promptly and rightly what must be done, especially in difficult circumstances. Counsel applies the principles furnished by Knowledge and Understanding to the innumerable concrete cases that confront us in the course of our daily duty as parents, teachers, public servants, and Christian citizens. Counsel is supernatural common sense, a priceless treasure in the quest of salvation. "Above all these things, pray to the Most High, that He may direct Your way in truth."

Prayer: Come, O Spirit of Counsel, help and guide me in all my ways, that I may always do Your holy will. Incline my heart to that which is good; turn it away from all that is evil, and direct me by the straight path of Your commandments to that goal of eternal life for which I long. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

FIFTH DAY - The Gift of Fortitude

By the gift of Fortitude the soul is strengthened against natural fear, and supported to the end in the performance of duty. Fortitude imparts to the will an impulse and energy which move it to undertake without hesitancy the most arduous tasks, to face dangers, to trample under foot human respect, and to endure without complaint the slow martyrdom of even lifelong tribulation. "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved."

Prayer: Come, O Blessed Spirit of Fortitude, uphold my soul in time of trouble and adversity, sustain my efforts after holiness, strengthen my weakness, give me courage against all the assaults of my enemies, that I may never be overcome and separated from You, my God and greatest Good. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

SIXTH DAY - The Gift of Knowledge

The gift of Knowledge enables the soul to evaluate created things at their true worth: in their relation to God. Knowledge unmask the pretense of creatures, reveals their emptiness, and points out their only true purpose as instruments in the service of God. It shows us the loving care of God even in adversity, and directs us to glorify Him in every circumstance of life. Guided by its light, we put first things first, and prize the friendship of God beyond all else. "Knowledge is a fountain of life to him that possesses it."

Prayer: Come, O Blessed Spirit of Knowledge, and grant that I may perceive the will of the Father; show me the nothingness of earthly things, that I may realize their vanity and use them only for Your glory and my own salvation, looking ever beyond them to You, and Your eternal rewards. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

SEVENTH DAY - The Gift of Piety

The gift of Piety begets in our hearts a filial affection for God as our most loving Father. It inspires us to love and respect for His sake persons and things consecrated to Him, as well as those who are vested with His authority, His Blessed Mother and the Saints, the Church and its visible Head, our parents and superiors, our country and its rulers. He who is filled with the gift of Piety finds the practice of his religion, not a burdensome duty, but a delightful service. Where there is love, there is no labor.

Prayer: Come, O Blessed Spirit of Piety, possess my heart. Enkindle therein such a love for God that I may find satisfaction only in His service, and for His sake lovingly submit to all legitimate authority. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

EIGHTH DAY - The Gift of Fear

The gift of Fear fills us with a sovereign respect for God, and makes us dread nothing so much as to offend Him by sin. It is a fear that arises, not from the thought of hell, but from sentiments of reverence and filial submission to our heavenly Father. It is fear that is the beginning of wisdom, detaching us from worldly pleasures that could in any way separate us from God. "They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls."

Prayer: Come, O blessed Spirit of Holy Fear, penetrate my inmost heart that I may set you, my Lord and God, before my face forever. Help me to shun all things that can offend You, and make me worthy to appear before the pure eyes of Your Divine Majesty in heaven, where You live and reign in the unity of the ever Blessed Trinity, God world without end. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

NINTH DAY - The Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect the supernatural virtues by enabling us to practice them with greater docility to divine inspiration. As we grow in the knowledge and love of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit, our service becomes more sincere and generous, the practice of virtue more perfect. Such acts of virtue leave the heart filled with joy and consolation and are known as Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These Fruits in turn render the practice of virtue more attractive and become a powerful incentive for still greater efforts in the service of God.

Prayer: Come, O Divine Spirit, fill my heart with Your heavenly fruits, Your charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, faith, mildness, and temperance, that I may never weary in the service of God, but by continued faithful submission to Your inspiration may merit to be united eternally with You in the love of the Father and the Son. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, Act of Consecration, Prayer for the Seven Gifts)

Holy Spirit Novena Prayers

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from . Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (recite daily during the nine days of the Novena)

O Lord Jesus Christ Who, before ascending into heaven did promise to send the Holy Spirit to finish Your work in the souls of Your disciples and witnesses, please grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul, the work of Your grace and Your love. Grant me the gift of Wisdom that I may know as God knows, striving to have the mind and heart of Jesus Christ, desiring the gifts that are for eternal life and despising those things that will lead me away; the gift of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of your divine truth; the gift of Knowledge that I may know You, know myself and know the value of all creation in light of their relationship with God so to grow in perfect holiness as the saints; the gift of Counsel that I may always know the right decisions to make in my life, to choose the good and to avoid evil, ever choosing the surest way of pleasing God and gaining heaven; the gift of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with You and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that prevent me from being a faithful disciple and constant witness; the gift of Piety that will heal my heart and open my heart tenderly towards God and others, so that service of You is sweet, and the gift of Fear that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to displease You. Mark me, dear Lord with the sign of Your true disciples and animate me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.

Act of Consecration to the Holy Spirit (recite daily during the nine days of the Novena)

On my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I offer myself, soul and body to You, Holy Spirit. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In you I live and move and have my being. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You. Mercifully guard my every thought, word, deed and hope. Grant that I may always watch for Your light, listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch for Your light, listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch over me in my weakness. Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus, looking at His Five Wounds, trusting in His Precious Blood, adoring His Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and everywhere, "Speak Lord for Your servant is listening." Amen.