

CONFIRMATION

Introduction:

It is the sacrament of growth and plenitude.

It completes the gifts of baptism and, through the superabundance of its graces, enables one to live as a good Christian.

It is not only for oneself, but in the eyes of the world; hence its importance today.

Note: Confirmation means to strengthen, to fortify; it is a matter of completing the grace of Baptism, of perfecting it. The word comes from St. Leo the Great. Before that, it was called the laying on of hands (St. Augustine) or mystical chrism (St. Cyril).

I. THE SENSITIVE SIGN IS THE CHRISM

- **Remote matter**) mixture of olive oil and balm, consecrated by the bishop on Maundy Thursday.

N.B.: The oil symbolizes the strength that athletes give themselves by massaging themselves before fighting in the arena. The balm, with its oriental fragrance, symbolizes the sweet smell of Jesus Christ and the virtues that emanate from a true Christian.

- **Proximate matter** is the anointing.
- **Form of the sacrament** indicates the sign of the cross, the emblem of the Christian on his forehead, which makes him a soldier; confirmation by chrism in the name of the Trinity (fullness of virtues and gifts necessary for this battle): *“I mark you with the sign of the cross and confirm you with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”*

II. THE CHARACTER, like baptism: confirmation imprints an indelible mark on the soul; the power, the spiritual strength of a soldier, a witness of Jesus Christ.

Through the fullness of its gifts, confirmation enables and allows us to be Christians not only for ourselves, but before the world, fighting for Jesus Christ and bearing witness to him (witness in Greek means martyr).

CHARACTERS		
BAPTISM	CONFIRMATION	ORDER
For oneself In relation to oneself ⇒ Son of God	For oneself In relation to others ⇒ Soldier and witness	For others ⇒ Minister

Saint Augustine: *“Christians for ourselves, bishops (priests) for you.”*

Undoubtedly, these three characters engender holiness in the person who receives them. But the ultimate goal is the sanctification of others in the order, and that of the person in baptism and confirmation. These last two are distinguished by the fullness of the second, which allows for sanctification against obstacles, in the face of the world, which is what is required of an adult (in faith) and not of a child.

Notes:

- This is why the bishop gives the newly confirmed person a slap to teach him to suffer for the honor of Jesus Christ.
- The perfect Christian (and therefore the perfect confirmed Christian) must therefore be capable of martyrdom, a heroic act of strength. St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was to be devoured by lions (under Trajan), explains in his letters that he is not yet a (perfect) Christian, but that he will become one.

III. THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION They come from the character as their source.

a) Increase in sanctifying grace (as in all sacraments).

Notes:

1) Any increase in the gift of sanctifying grace presupposes a mission of the Holy Spirit. To receive sanctifying grace is to participate in the divine nature. This ad extra (external) work of the Trinity (common to all three persons) is attributed to the Holy Spirit because its effect is sanctification and divine charity (cf. Trinity).

2) God is thus made present in our souls no longer as a simple creator (in all beings) because of His efficiency (through his power, his presence and his substance, for we cannot distinguish in God His elements), but in Himself, in an intimate mystery of supernatural charity (for the righteous alone), as the Divine Guest and Object of Love. **Love makes the beloved present, unlike knowledge, which can leave him absent.** Hence the superiority in this respect of love over knowledge, of charity over faith, while in itself, intelligence is a greater faculty than the will. It is this marvelous presence of God in the souls of the righteous (cf. Gospel) that is called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

b) The sacramental grace.

It consists of the fullness of the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which enables the soul to achieve the end of the sacrament (the public life of a perfect Christian).

The virtues (see below, Lesson 22) are stable, supernatural dispositions that enable us to do good. But it is we ourselves who act through these virtues.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also habitual dispositions, but distinct from the former in that it is no longer we who act, but the Holy Spirit who acts in us through his gifts. We are acted upon. *“Those who are led by the Holy Spirit are sons of God”* (Romans 8:14 and Galatians 4: 4-7).

It is therefore normal that virtues and gifts correspond to each other. They have the same effect and the same purpose, but the mode of operation is quite different (to move a boat forward, one can row (virtues) or winch the sail and take advantage of the wind (gifts). This explains the wonderful docility of the saints to God’s will and the ease with which they always do what is most perfect. Manifest in the saints, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for all Christians (through baptism and confirmation). They are necessary for salvation, says St. Thomas. It is a true supernatural “instinct”.

VIRTUS	GIFTS	EXAMPLES
FAITH	Intelligence: intimate knowledge of supernatural mysteries	Saint Thomas wishes to burn his Summa before the grandeur of the mysteries that God shows him.
HOPE	Science: supernatural knowledge of created things	Saint Francis of Assisi sees every creature as a friend of God (cf. <i>“Canticle of the Sun,”</i> or <i>“Praise of the Creatures”</i>).
CHARITY	Wisdom: Knowing the ultimate reasons for divine judgements through divine intimacy	Saint Paul: The Holy Spirit searches all mysteries, even the depths of God, and gives the spiritual man the power to judge all things.
PRUDENCE	Counsel: Extend caution to specific matters by guiding the deliberations of reason.	David: Eats the bread of the offering, which is reserved for priests alone.
JUSTICE	Piety: Elevates justice according to higher reasons and not strict law.	David: Maintains reverence for Saul - despite his crimes - because he is God’s anointed.
FORTITUDE	Fortitude: Controls passions to the point of total sacrifice	Saint Ignatius: Strike the beast that will devour him to be more surely a martyr.
TEMPERANCE	Fear: Of being separated from God, for himself, by sin	Saint Joan of Arc: “I would be the most unhappy of girls if I knew I was not in a state of grace.”

IV. THE MINISTER OF THIS SACRAMENT IS THE BISHOP (*ordinary*) OR THE PRIEST (*having received jurisdiction for this: extraordinary*).

The bishop is the normal minister of a Christian and is ultimately responsible for his perfection. (The priest is only the bishop’s collaborator). It is therefore up to the bishop to bring perfection to its fullness (just as the master puts the finishing touches to a masterpiece while the apprentice does the rough work).