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A Bible icon in the margin gives the reference for any Scripture passages quoted in the paragraph.



The CCC icon gives reference numbers for any passage from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## PART TWO

# The Sacrament of Confirmation

### Scripture (*John 3:34-36*)

For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

*See also Mk. 10:35-45, Acts 10:44-48.*

### From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (727, 1288)

The entire mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of time, is contained in this: that the Son is the one anointed by the Father's Spirit since his Incarnation—Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah... Christ's whole work is in fact a joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.

*See also CCC 691, 1285, 1293, 1296, 1302-1306.*

### Background

A study of Confirmation provides the opportunity to deepen and reaffirm our faith in the central doctrine of Christianity, a reality so profound that it could only be known by God's self-revelation to us.

From all eternity, with no beginning and no interruption, the Son gives himself over in love and gratitude to the Father. And his receiving and giving and the Father's giving and receiving are total and complete and divine: the Person-Love, Person-Gift we have learned to call "Holy Spirit," the "Spirit of the Father and the Son."

The three equal sharers in the one divine nature are always gift to each other. And there is nothing (not even in heaven!) which is more blissful than love.

Creation was God's utterly free and original invention of a way to share the happiness of living in love. The Father spoke and the original Word was echoed in a totally new way. The Spirit hovered over the chaos and gently ordered it according to the Image, maintaining both similarity and distinction between God and not-God. And in a gift of tender generosity, the Trinity created beings capable of communion, able to freely assume the life of self-gift. Multitudes of angels imaged the Trinitarian Lord's wisdom and beauty and were invited to accept God's love as their life. And then came an even deeper condescension, as the Father spoke a new word, a little clay word. The call to communion was written into this nature: they would only exist as a "unity of the two." The Spirit breathed into it to complete the creature of clay who would be invited to live of God's own life.

Even after sin, the call to communion among themselves and with God remained—although so great an obstacle had been raised against it that only God could bring about the possibility of a response. The Father made bold promises; the Spirit raised up prophets; the Word was Way and Truth and Life in the Law, until the people were readied and the Virgin was born who would “hear the word of God and keep it.”

In her, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son, who had received his Sonship from the Father as an eternal, free and welcome gift in the Spirit, received a created nature. Christ did not “clothe” himself in the clay as if it were a costume: he became clay, without losing his identity as only-Begotten. The eternal, true and equal Image was now expressed in human flesh. God’s self-revelation was offered not through detached concepts, but in person. And in the Father’s plan, this Jesus was “the source of the Spirit for all mankind” (CCC 536).

## Prayer

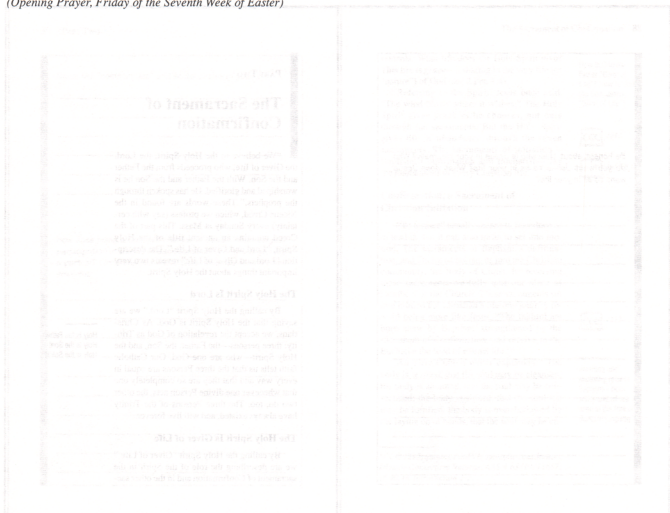
Father,

in glorifying Christ and sending us your Spirit,  
you open the way to eternal life.

May our sharing in this gift increase our love  
and make our faith grow stronger.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and  
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

*(Opening Prayer, Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter)*



## The Creed

A creed is a summary of belief. Sometimes a creed is called a profession of faith. The word "creed" comes from the Latin *credo*, which means "I believe." Throughout the centuries many Christian creeds have been written; most begin with the words "I believe" or "we believe." The two most important creeds professed by Catholics are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. They are rooted in Scripture, and they present part of the Church's living tradition.

The Apostles' Creed contains twelve articles, or statements of belief. We know that as early as the second century adults in Rome professed the

Apostles' Creed at their Baptism. It is called the Apostles' Creed because the Church tells us that it sums up what the apostles believed and taught.

Most of the Nicene Creed was written at the Council of Nicea, held in 325 for the purpose of explaining more fully the Church's understanding of who Jesus is. In the year 381, the Council of Constantinople lengthened the Nicene Creed, adding more about the Holy Spirit. We profess that creed on Sunday; it is known as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, or simply the Nicene Creed.

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Be honest about this: who is Jesus in your life, really? Who do you want Jesus to be in your life? What does Jesus want to be in your life?

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## PART TWO

### The Sacrament of Confirmation

"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets." These words are found in the Nicene Creed, which we profess (say with certainty) every Sunday at Mass. This part of the Creed contains an ancient title of the Holy Spirit, "Lord and Giver of Life." The description "Lord and Giver of Life" reveals two very important things about the Holy Spirit.

#### The Holy Spirit Is Lord

By calling the Holy Spirit "Lord," we are saying that the Holy Spirit is God. As Christians, we accept the revelation of God as Trinity: three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who are one God. Our Catholic faith tells us that the three Persons are equal in every way and that they are so completely one that whenever one divine Person acts, the other two do, too. The three Persons of the Trinity have always existed, and will live forever.

#### The Holy Spirit Is Giver of Life

By calling the Holy Spirit "Giver of Life," we are describing the role of the Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation and in the other sac-

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Holy is the Father!  
Holy is the Son!  
Holy is the Spirit!



## The Sacrament of Penance

Penance repairs our relationship with God and the Church which sin damaged. Celebrating the sacrament of Penance involves: contrition (sorrow for sin and resolve to avoid sin in the future), confession (admission of sin), penance (positive action to make up for sin), and absolution (God's forgiveness). The purpose and effect of the sacrament of Penance is reconciliation—healing the wounds within ourselves and in our relationship with God, those around us, and the whole Church.

We prepare for the sacrament of Penance by taking a careful look at our choices. This is the “examination of conscience.” Its purpose is to help the Christian uncover his or her sins. The most important thing about preparing for Penance is not

creating a detailed list of sins or failings (although all mortal sins a person remembers must be confessed); what matters most are the person's inner attitudes of repentance and of the determination to avoid sin. Repentance does not mean maudlin depression; rather, it is regret that is based on faith and is confident of God's merciful love shown in Jesus who died to save us all.

The determination to avoid sin and the “near occasions of sin” is a decision and a promise to work with the grace the sacrament offers, and so to be firm in resisting whatever persons, places or things usually lead to sin.

(continued on p. 22)

Name the “communities” and social circles of your life.

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How does being a Catholic follower of Jesus influence your participation in the life of each community or group you are a part of? Circle the one where that influence seems least powerful.

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raments. What life does the Holy Spirit give? This life is *grace*—a sharing in the very life (or “nature”) of God (see 2 Pet. 1:4).

Referring to the Spirit, Jesus once said, “The wind blows where it wishes.” The Holy Spirit gives grace as he chooses, not only through the sacraments. But the Holy Spirit gives life in *abundance* through the seven sacraments. The sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist—“lay the foundations of every Christian life.”

How is God the Father “Giver of Life”? How is God the Son, Jesus, “Giver of Life”?

CCC 1212

Jn. 3:8

### Confirmation, a Sacrament of Christian Initiation

“To initiate” usually means to introduce or to lead in, but it can also mean to set into motion. The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist initiate us into the Christian community, the Body of Christ. By receiving these sacraments we fully take our place as members of the Church. These sacraments set into motion the Christian's lifelong journey toward being more like Jesus. “The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.”<sup>8</sup>

An early Church writer explained: “The body is washed, that the soul may be cleansed; the body is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the body is signed, that the soul too may be fortified; the body is overshadowed by the laying on of hands, that the soul may be en-

CCC 1212

Washing and anointing refer to Baptism—both water and oil are used in the Rite of Baptism. Signing

<sup>8</sup>CCC 1212, quoting Paul VI, apostolic constitution, *Divinae Consortium Naturae*: AAS n. 63 (1971) 657; cf. *RCA Introduction* 1-2.

(continued from p. 21)

Students may be only vaguely familiar with the Rite of Penance and the manner of confessing one's sins. It would be a good idea to go through the Rite with them, and to invite a priest to speak about issues related to the sacrament (especially "what and how to confess") as well as matters such as the seal of confession (which is different than the "seal" or character of confirmation), the modes of confession (face to face or anonymous) and the assigned "penance." Encourage the young people to make the sacrament of Penance part of their spiritual life as Catholics.

- ① (Student Book, p. 33) Identify the writer as Tertullian (A.D. 160-220).
- ② (Student Book, p. 33) Notice the "more" here. Confirmation "completes" the grace first given in Baptism. Discuss: how does each of the points relate to Baptism before being deepened in Confirmation?
- ③ (Student Book, also p. 33) The priest who confirms does so only with chrism consecrated by a bishop.
- ④ (Student Book, also p. 33) Remind the candidates that in antiquity, important documents or letters were closed with melted wax imprinted by a distinctive seal. The seal was a guarantee

Envision JESUS as a participating member of that community or group you circled on page 30. (Think of his love for the Father; his love for the poor and the ignored; his willingness to give himself over for others. Would you really want Jesus in that community?)

How might Jesus' presence change the community?

Can your presence have the same effect? How? If not, why not?

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- ① lightened by the Spirit: the body is fed on the Body and Blood of Christ, that the soul may be richly nourished by God."

#### The Effects and Purpose of Confirmation

Earlier, we touched on the meaning of one of the Holy Spirit's titles, "Lord and Giver of Life." We know that the gift of Confirmation is the Spirit, and that the Spirit gives life. When the Holy Spirit gives new life to even one person, the whole Church is built up!

- ② The Spirit brings about a spiritual transformation, bringing the person to share *more deeply* in the grace received at Baptism. The sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the person and binds him or her *more closely* to the three Persons of the Trinity and to the Church. Christ becomes *more "visible"* through the person who is confirmed. The Christian then witnesses to Christ, showing and telling the world about the truth and beauty of the life and message of Jesus. The confirmed Catholic is readied to stand up for the Catholic faith when need arises, and to give an explanation of Church teachings to those who ask.

#### The Character of Confirmation

- ④ The sacrament of Confirmation can be received only once. When a person has been signed, or anointed by the bishop, he or she has been "sealed." A seal indicates ownership or belonging; it may also be a sign of authenticity.

By the seal or "character" of Confirmation, one is marked out forever as an authentic witness to Jesus Christ, and a sharer in his priest-

and the laying on of hands refer to Confirmation. Feeding on the Body and Blood of Christ refers to the Eucharist.

Even though Confirmation is usually given by a bishop, the sacrament is so important that Church law authorizes priests to confirm any baptized Catholic—even a tiny child—in danger of death.

 *1 Pet.*  
5:15-16

Initials, logos and even the holograms on credit cards and driver's licenses are modern examples of seals.



- ⑦ (Student Book, p. 36) Service is an “outwardization” of faith and prayer, an expression of one’s relationship with and commitment to Christ. Candidates can be invited to envision new areas of service the parish can offer in order to address the needs of the community.
- ⑧ (Student Book, p. 37) Review the difference between mortal and venial sin and their drastically different effects. It is important to be clear about this, so as to spare students unnecessary scruples about venial sins or mere faults, and to provide the possibility of conversion to those who may be caught in patterns of seriously sinful acts.

- ⑨ (Student Book, p. 37) The examples of Dorothy Day and Jean Vanier are especially helpful in demonstrating the power of grace to transform a person and even society. If a house of L’Arche or the Catholic Worker movement is near your area, see about the possibilities of visiting them and sharing in their service.
- ⑩ (Student Book, p. 37) This is a good point for a review of the Commandments and Beatitudes as they apply in contemporary situations. The Commandments, Beatitudes and Works of Mercy are in the “Catholic Prayer and Life” pages (found in Appendix A of this book, and on pages 79-86 of the student book).

- ⑦ LIST areas of need: “physical” needs (life issues, homelessness, hunger); “social” needs (addictions, family issues, violence, environmental threats, consumerism); “spiritual” needs (loneliness, ignorance, despair, apathy).
- REFLECT: How would Jesus look at these needs? Does the Bible mention any of them? What does the Bible say? (A concordance would help with this.)
- ENVISION two or three possible responses to each need. This may lead to RESEARCH about groups that are already addressing the needs, and what help they might need.
- SELECT from the many needs and responses the possibilities that are concretely open to your parish.
- ACT: Draw up steps and a proposal for one of the possibilities, and—if ready to commit to it—present your proposal to the parish.

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- very close at hand, such as the effort against sin. Grace, our sharing in God’s life, is not fragile but it can be extinguished. Mortal sin (the knowing, deliberate choice of something seriously wrong—or the deliberate avoidance of a serious obligation) is a rejection of God’s life. It not only harms the one who commits it: it affects the whole Church. Even less serious (venial) sin can weaken our friendship with and faithfulness to God and the Church. By joining you more closely to God and the Church, Confirmation can strengthen you against the causes of sin. Confirmation can also be the starting point of a vigorous spiritual life—a life in God that never stops growing!
- The strength of Confirmation makes it possible to live as Christ’s true disciple and witness: forming and obeying a Christian conscience and growing in the spirit of the beatitudes and in virtue. “Grace” and “salvation” involve the whole person. That is why a person transformed by grace can be such an influence in transforming situations of injustice, need, poverty, or alienation. In the lives of many dedicated Catholics, the sacramental grace of fortitude takes the form of perseverance in the service of charity and justice.
- The Spirit has been working within you since Baptism, transforming you. In Confirmation, that same divine Spirit will give you spiritual life, light and strength in greater abundance so that you can work for the Kingdom, transforming the earth into a place where God can be “seen” as Lord. The harder you work, the more you will need to nourish yourself on the Eucharist, which Jesus has given to all of us

The Church is authorized by Christ to forgive any and all sin, no matter how serious or repulsive. Through the sacrament of Penance, received with sincere repentance, sin is forgiven and grace, if lost through mortal sin, is restored. The sinner “comes back to life” and the angels of God rejoice.

✠ Lk. 15  
(the whole chapter)





## Investigating Theologian

Share the results of the interviews. What are some of the common threads that emerge?

The next project looks at the historical/geographical/cultural roots of the parish.

- ① (Student Book, p. 39) The Eucharist takes us into the self-giving of Jesus' life, especially his dying and rising. When we receive the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion, he shares his attitude of self-giving with us. As our likeness to Jesus grows, we begin to serve others because Jesus' self-giving love is becoming ours. Our relationship with Jesus expresses itself in service.

### Investigating Theologian

Learn about the parish and its place in the local Church. When was the parish founded? How many families did it include at the time? (Now?) Who were its first pastors? How many parishioners have followed a call to the priesthood or religious life? How have population shifts affected the parish? What is its current place in the wider community? What are its biggest challenges right now?

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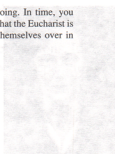
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- ① to sustain us—to keep us going. In time, you may discover the real truth: that the Eucharist is the reason Christians give themselves over in service.





## Witness: Blessed Edel Quinn

Edel Quinn made a particular gift of herself to the Church as a single person. Her service was heartfelt and sincere: she lived out all that she encouraged others to do.

Name some people in your community who are true evangelizers in life and word.

## Prayer Form

### Lectio Divina

*"Lectio Divina"* (Latin for "sacred reading") is prayerful reading—especially of Scripture. It can be thought of in four stages:

**Read:** See the words as coming from Jesus to you, personally.

**Meditate:** Read slowly; underline phrases that speak to your heart.

**Pray:** Spend time with the underlined phrases. Let your heart respond to them. Formulate the resolutions or intentions that come from your prayer.

**Contemplate:** Let the Spirit lead you to loving adoration.

40 Part Two



### Witness

**Blessed Edel Quinn**  
1907-1944

*"What boundless trust we should have in God's love...."*

Athletic and upbeat, deeply loved by family and friends, at age 20 Edel Quinn of Ireland had already received a proposal of marriage (from her boss!) and been given a leadership role in a Catholic organization. Her daily routine—Mass and rosary before work; lunch hour spent visiting the sick or those who had fallen away from the Church—revealed something of her inner life. When tuberculosis prevented her from following her heart's dream of consecrating herself to God as a Poor Clare nun, Edel found another way to give her life to the Lord.

Profoundly committed to the newly-founded Legion of Mary, Edel gave her full two weeks' vacation time over to its mission in Wales, trying to lay the groundwork for the Legion outside of its native Ireland. The trip was exhausting, but Edel came home with surprising energy and even offered to move to England, so that the evangelizing work of the Legion of Mary could take root there. At that very time, a Legion of Mary missionary in Africa wrote a plea for help in bringing the Gospel across that enormous continent. For Edel Quinn, it was the voice

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of God, pointing out her true vocation: she would leave everything—her family, her friends and her country—and follow Jesus as a lay apostle.

The challenges were enormous. In Nairobi (which became Edel's home base), the Catholics were divided by ethnic groups and social classes. Even Church leaders were politely skeptical about the work Edel had come to launch: how did she expect people to work *together*—even to spread the Gospel?

But within two weeks, Edel had already formed a small group—the beginnings of the Legion of Mary in Nairobi. They visited the sick and encouraged fellow Christians to actively live the Gospel. Soon another group was formed. Edel began hitchhiking rides on open trucks, visiting villages across Kenya, and inviting the Catholics to become evangelizers in their own region. She spoke of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the one who first gave Jesus to others: the members of the Legion of Mary carried out the same mission when they brought the Gospel to those who had forgotten its message—or had never heard it.

Edel's missionary drive made her creative and confident. She took incredible risks to travel to out-of-the-way places, or to arrive in time for a Legion of Mary gathering or prayer service. She seemed unstoppable. Six months after her arrival in Nairobi, a service of consecration was held for the new Legion of Mary members. An African choir provided the music; the sermon was bilingual (Swahili and English); the prayer of self-offering was made in three different languages. Already the "impossible" had been achieved.

Edel's active service in East Africa lasted just under eight years. She died in 1944, at age 36, her strength consumed by the gift she had made of herself to Jesus and his Church.