

Confirmation

for teens

LESSON SIX

The Sacrament of the Holy Spirit

Confirmation is often called *the sacrament of the Holy Spirit* because through it we are "sealed by the Gift of the Holy Spirit." In reading about the "The Celebration of Christian Mystery" in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we learn that "by the sacrament of confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit" (#1285).

By Debbie Repp



In the sacrament of confirmation, special emphasis is placed on the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the community. It is important for us, therefore, to review what the Church treasures concerning the Holy Spirit.

Our *Catechism* has much to teach regarding the power of the Spirit. We learn that the Holy Spirit animates all creation, being “at the origin of the being and life of every creature” (CCC #703). The Spirit awakens our faith, enables communication with Christ (CCC #683-684), helps us to grow in spiritual freedom (#1742), is the master and source of prayer (#741, 2652), and is the “principal author” of holy Scripture (#304). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God is revealed to us, as is the mystery of the Trinity (CCC #244, 684, 687). The Church, in fact, regards the Holy Spirit as *the source of all holiness* (CCC #749).

Regarding our Church communities, the *Catechism* teaches that the Spirit is essential in unifying the Church (#813) and is responsible for directing and supporting the Church (#747, 768). The

Church is the temple, the very dwelling place, of the Spirit (CCC #797-98).

The Holy Spirit is also a generous bearer of gifts (CCC #2003). One of the great benefits of receiving the sacrament of confirmation is that it “increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us” (CCC #1303). We will take a closer look at the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in the next lesson. For now, let’s examine what happens when we are “sealed by the Gift of the Holy Spirit” during confirmation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* firmly states that confirmation is a celebration of “Christian mystery” in which those being confirmed receive “the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (#1302). But once we receive this magnificent gift, we assume great responsibility, as did the apostles before us. Carefully read the excerpts from the *Catechism* concerning the effects of confirmation. Hopefully, you will get a better idea of why confirmation is considered the *active* part of the initiation process.

1303 From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”;
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;
- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.

1304 Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too 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 [or her] with power from on high so that he [or she] may be his witness.

The Catholic Church's tremendous reverence for the Holy Spirit is rooted in sacred Scripture. The authors of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, were aware of the Spirit's indescribable creative power, and they refer to this power in the first passage of Scripture: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

In the Hebrew vocabulary, there is one word, *RUAH*, which means "wind," "breath," and "spirit." The different English translations vary mainly in reference to how they interpret the word, but in all

translations, this Scripture verse tells us that the creative power of the Holy Spirit *was present and active at the beginning of creation.*

The word *RUAH* again appears in Genesis

2:7: "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath* of life; and the man became a living being." The spirit of God is as close to us as our very own breath! God

indeed made us in God's own image and likeness — and then breathed into us *the divine life and spirit!*

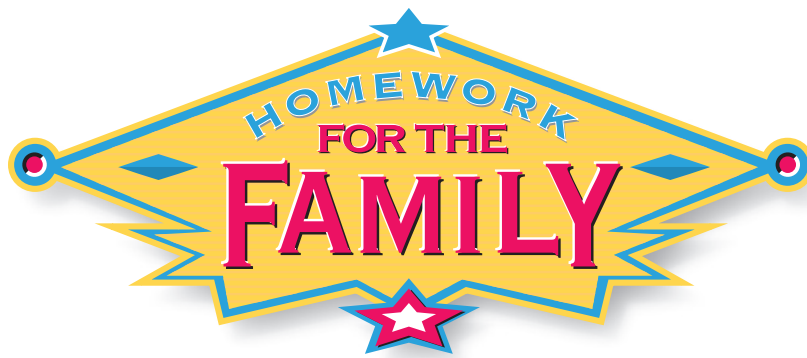
The Spirit that hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation also hovered over Jesus, and remained his inspiration throughout his public life. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells us:

**"The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to
the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the
captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of
the Lord's favor." 4:18-19**



JESUS does not send us out into the world to do HIS work alone. In confirmation, we are sealed with *the same Holy Spirit*. In confirmation, we celebrate

our acceptance of the gift of the Spirit of Jesus and we commit ourselves to become positive, active members of his Church.



An understanding of the Holy Spirit requires faith and the acceptance of “mystery” in our lives. The Spirit cannot be described in human terms. Even the “inspired” authors of the Bible could only use words like “wind,” “breath,” and “spirit.”

Yet, chances are, each of us has somehow *experienced* the power and workings of the Holy Spirit. Take a few minutes with the other members of your family. Can you recall instances when you felt the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your lives? (Do not search for grand examples — most often the influence of the Spirit is subtle.)

On the lines below, briefly record a single instance when you believe the Holy Spirit was instrumental in your life, or in the life of your family, or even in the life of your faith community. (Recall the grace of a special friendship, the healing of wounds within family relationships, the feeling of “oneness” experienced by church members as they praise God through the singing of a special hymn.) As always, after you record your thoughts, post this page in a place where you will come across it often in the next week. Try to be especially aware of the work of the Spirit in your life and in the lives of your friends and loved ones throughout the week.

Date: _____



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