

A Middle School Confirmation Program

saint mary's press

# Anointed in the Spirit

Candidate  
Handbook

Rita Burns Senseman

# Anointed in the Spirit

Candidate  
Handbook





# Anointed in the Spirit

## Candidate Handbook

A Middle School Confirmation Program

Rita Burns Senseman



saint mary's press



The Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found this catechetical text, copyright 2010, to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Nihil Obstat: Rev. William M. Becker, STD  
Censor Librorum  
November 13, 2009

Imprimatur: Most Rev. John M. Quinn, DD  
Bishop of Winona  
November 13, 2009

The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the nihil obstat or imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed, nor do they assume any legal responsibility associated with publication.

The publishing team included Maura Thompson Hagarty, development editor; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary's Press.

Copyright © 2010 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, [www.smp.org](http://www.smp.org). All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

2820 (PO4328)

ISBN 978-0-88489-814-6, Print

# Contents

Welcome! . . . . .	7
1. Being a Candidate . . . . .	14
2. Baptism: Waters of New Life . . . . .	27
3. Renewing Baptismal Promises . . . . .	41
4. The Laying On of Hands . . . . .	55
5. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . . .	68
6. Being Anointed by the Holy Spirit . . . . .	82
7. The Eucharist: The Heart of the Church's Life . . . . .	96
8. Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation . . . . .	111
Appendix A: Catholic Prayers . . . . .	126
Appendix B: Catholic Beliefs and Practices . . . . .	138
Appendix C: Patron Saints and Their Causes . . . . .	144
Acknowledgments . . . . .	159

# You're Invited!

This is an invitation to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. This isn't an ordinary invitation to just any celebration. You are invited to complete your Christian initiation by receiving a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

God created you in his image through love, and he continues to love you. God is always calling you to communion with him and wants you to find happiness. Celebrating Confirmation strengthens your relationship with God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and helps you to live a life of faith!



# Welcome!

## About This Handbook

This book has been created to make your preparation for Confirmation enjoyable, fruitful, and memorable. Here is what you will find in this book:

### A Walk Through the Rite of Confirmation

The chapters of this book introduce you to central aspects of the Confirmation liturgy and help you to explore the meaning of the Sacrament. The material will help you to deepen your understanding of God's call to you to live a life of faith and to explore the significance of being confirmed Catholic.





Jesus  
Connection

Dear God

Did  
You Know?

Catholic  
Connection

## Special Features

Each chapter includes a number of special features designed to enhance your preparation. These include the following sidebars:

### Jesus Connection

These sidebars help you learn more about who Jesus is and how he is central to our faith and to the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### Dear God

The “Dear God” feature offers a short prayer for you to pray on your own and with others during your preparation sessions.

### Did You Know?

These sidebars explore topics related to Confirmation that complement the main chapter material.

### Catholic Connection

The “Catholic Connection” sidebars help you to review some of the central teachings of the Church.

## Right from the Rite

This feature presents quotations from the *Rite of Confirmation* and other rites of the Church. A rite is an official liturgical celebration, such as the Rite of Baptism for Children and the Rite of Confirmation.

## Words from the Word

The “Words from the Word” are Scripture quotations.

## My Mission

The “My Mission” feature invites you to record ideas for how to live as a follower of Jesus who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

## Journaling

Each chapter ends with a journal page that includes suggestions for reflection. If your leader or catechist doesn’t invite you to complete these pages during your sessions, you can complete them on your own.





You are part of the Communion of Saints. Call to mind a few of the saints who are most meaningful to you.

## Catholic Prayers and Beliefs

At the end of this handbook, you will find a handy collection of prayers and summaries of Catholic beliefs and practices in two separate appendixes.

## Saints

Another feature you will find at the end of the book is a list of saints. The list is organized according to causes and groups. These are the special causes or groups of people the saints have been linked to in the Church's tradition. Also included are the saints' feast days. This list may be helpful if you consider choosing a new name for Confirmation (see the section titled "Your Confirmation Name").

## Overview of the Preparation Program

Every parish does Confirmation preparation a little bit differently, but here are several activities you may be invited to participate in beyond preparation sessions with your fellow candidates:

- orientation sessions for parents, sponsors, and candidates
- conversations with your sponsor
- a retreat
- a celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation
- activities that promote justice or provide a service to people in need
- a rehearsal for Confirmation

Your leader or catechist will provide you with detailed information about your parish's program. He or she will also talk to you about choosing a sponsor and a Confirmation name.

## Your Confirmation Sponsor

Choosing a Confirmation sponsor is an important decision for candidates. Spend some time thinking about whom you will choose, praying about your choice, and talking with a parent.

If feasible, your sponsor for Confirmation should be one of your godparents from Baptism. This helps to show the close relationship between your Baptism and your Confirmation. Plus, it makes sense because your godparents have made a commitment to help and support you in your Christian life. And that's exactly what a Confirmation sponsor does! A Confirmation sponsor helps and supports you in being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

You do, however, have the option of choosing someone other than a god-

parent. The Church says a Confirmation sponsor is a person who . . .

- is at least sixteen years of age (unless your diocese has established a different age)
- has been confirmed and has received the Eucharist
- is a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church

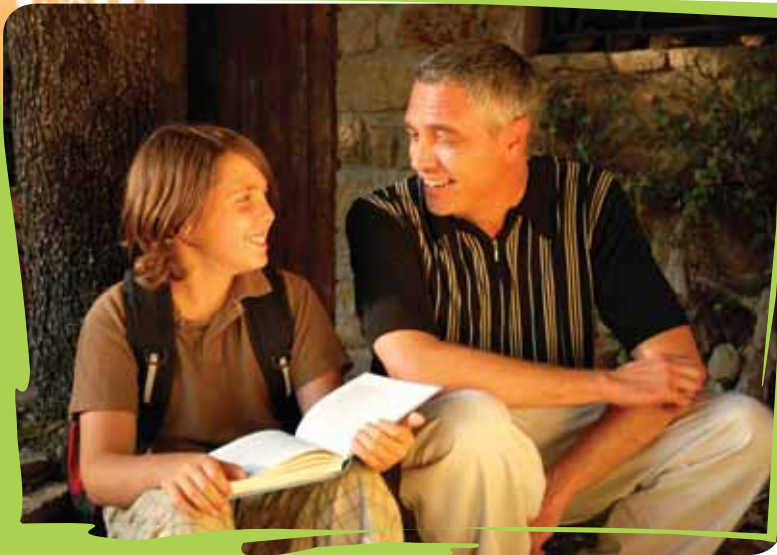
Here are a few questions that may help you choose your Confirmation sponsor:

- If both godparents are available to sponsor you, is one of them a better choice for a Confirmation sponsor?
- Is the person a good role model for the Catholic way of life?
- Does the person have time to spend with you as you prepare for Confirmation? Is he or she available to come to the rehearsal and the celebration of Confirmation? (Even if the person can't come, he or she might

still be a good sponsor. Check with your leader or catechist about this.)

- Would you feel comfortable talking about your faith with this person?

If you have any questions, talk to your catechist or the leader of your preparation program.



© Carmen Martinez / iStockphoto.com

Your Confirmation sponsor is a role model who guides you in the Catholic way of life. And, is someone you can talk to about your faith. Who do you think would be a good sponsor?

## Your Confirmation Name

When you are confirmed, the bishop will say, “(your name), be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit (*Rite of Confirmation*, number 27).” There are two main practices regarding the name the bishop will say. The first is to use your baptismal name. The second is to select a new name. Your catechist or program leader will give you guidance about your options.

## Baptismal Name

During your preparation for Confirmation, you will hear a lot about the close relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. You will learn that Confirmation completes the process of initiation that was begun in Baptism. You will also learn that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation perfects the

grace you received in Baptism. When Confirmation candidates are confirmed using their baptismal names, the close connection between Baptism and Confirmation is highlighted.

## New Name

In some parishes and dioceses, candidates have the option of selecting new names for Confirmation or using their baptismal names. If you consider selecting a new name, a good approach is to choose the name of a saint or a holy person whose life inspires you to live faithfully. This name can be a symbol of what you will strive for in your life as a confirmed Catholic.



# 1 Being a Candidate



Have you ever run for student council at your school? or maybe you know someone who was a candidate for student council? Have you or your parents ever publicly supported a candidate for mayor or maybe even for president? Being a candidate is a big deal!

Why is being a candidate such a big deal? A candidate is someone who is being considered for something important like a leadership position or an award. Perhaps you've had a coach who was a candidate for a coach-of-the-year award or a friend who was a candidate for a science award. If you are a candidate for



something, then chances are it's a pretty big deal. And that's the case here. You are a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation. That is definitely a big deal!

Like most important things, being a candidate involves some work and comes with some responsibilities. For example, if you were a candidate for president of the United States, you would have to campaign and let people know why you would be a good president. If you were a candidate for student council, you would tell your classmates why you should be elected. You might say: "I am a hard worker and very trustworthy. I promise to bring your ideas to the council."

Being a candidate for the Sacrament of Confirmation is different though, because you don't campaign. You don't have to be voted in or elected. God has already elected or chosen you

through Baptism. Any baptized person who reaches the appropriate age can and should become a candidate for Confirmation. Everyone is encouraged to be confirmed, because without Confirmation a person's Christian initiation is incomplete. Confirmation adds to the gift of new life we receive in Baptism. Confirmation is like getting an extra gift. It deepens the gift of the Holy Spirit we receive in Baptism.

## **Your Confirmation Candidacy**

When you are a candidate for Confirmation, you are in a period of preparation for receiving the Sacrament. You have a special place in the Church, and your parish community has a responsibility to help you get ready for Confirmation.

# My Mission

## A Candidate's Mission

Now that you are a candidate for Confirmation, your mission is to prepare yourself for the celebration of the Sacrament. What will you do to prepare?

## What the Parish Promises

Here are some of the things the parish promises to help you with while you are preparing for Confirmation:

- developing a closer relationship with God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- becoming more familiar with the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in your life
- gaining a stronger sense of belonging to the Church—your parish as well as the worldwide or universal Church
- developing greater capability to serve others and contribute to the Church's mission

Be assured that members of your parish will also be praying for you.



© Bill Witman

The Church stands with you as you prepare for Confirmation. Members of your parish will help you along the way. What might fellow parishioners do for you?

## What Is Asked of You

Even though candidates for Confirmation do not campaign, the Church does ask that you be prepared and that you meet certain requirements. Here's a checklist of guidelines:



### A Candidate's Checklist

- ☐ I am baptized.
  - ☐ I have not been confirmed before.
  - ☐ I am over the age of seven (or other age set by my bishop).
  - ☐ I want to live as a disciple of Christ and be a witness to the Christian way of life for others.
  - ☐ I am willing to seek guidance about the Christian life from my Confirmation sponsor.
  - ☐ I want to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and complete my initiation into the Church, which began with my Baptism.
  - ☐ I am willing to pray more often in order to be better prepared to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.
  - ☐ I am capable of renewing my baptismal promises. (We'll talk more about baptismal promises in chapter 3.)
  - ☐ I am willing to receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation before receiving Confirmation to make sure I am in the state of grace (see the "Did You Know?" feature on page 24).
  - ☐ I attend Mass.
  - ☐ I am willing to spend time preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation and learning more about its meaning and significance for my life.
- Your parish or diocese probably has some additional guidelines or requirements, so check with your catechist or parish leader.



## Right from the Rite

“Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation. In this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit who the Lord sent upon the apostles on Pentecost.” (*Rite of Confirmation*, number 1)

## What God Promises

First and foremost, God promises love. Because he loves us, God has revealed to us that he is one God in three Persons: the Trinity. This is the central mystery of Christianity. The three divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are completely in union with one another, and their love flows out to us. God has given himself to us and calls us to share in the love and life of the Trinity.

God desires that we will respond to his Revelation with faith. Faith is first of all a gift from God. Someone cannot have faith without the Holy Spirit, who helps us see our need for God. Being free to choose our response to this gift is part of our nature as humans. Being faithful is possible when someone understands and freely chooses to believe in God and his Church. Our salvation depends on our faith.

Having faith means that we believe. Believing is also an act of the entire Church. Don't confuse Church—with a capital C—with a building. The Church is the community of faithful people who put their faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Church that teaches you. It is the Church that is a role model for you. It is the Church that supports and nourishes your own faith.

One part of a faith-filled response to God is to complete your initiation into the Church by being confirmed. Through the waters of Baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit, we become members

of Christ's Body, the Church. God continues to call us throughout our lives to deepen our relationship with him and strengthen our bond with the Church.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, there is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those being confirmed. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Father, united with Christ, accomplishes great things for us:

- Our relationship with the Father grows deeper.
- We are united more firmly to Jesus Christ.
- The Gifts of the Holy Spirit increase in us.
- Our connection with the Church increases, and we are better able to continue the Church's mission.
- The Holy Spirit gives us a special strength to be witnesses to the Christian way of life through what we say and what we do.

And, rest assured, God always keeps his promises! So even if you don't do all the things you say you'll do, God will always do what he says. God's promises are trustworthy and eternal.

We do not have to earn God's gifts. That is not at all the point of spending some time in preparation as a candidate for Confirmation. The time of preparation is meant to help candidates be receptive to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God calls each of us at all times and pours out his love upon us. The challenge for us is to recognize his love and his call and to respond with faithful living.

## Called by God

The Scriptures are filled with accounts of people who heard God's call and responded with faith. Here are a few of those people and the verses where you can read about them.

Biblical People	Scripture Verses
Abraham	Genesis 12:1–9
Moses	Exodus 3:1–12
Samuel	1 Samuel 3:1–10
Isaiah	Isaiah 6:1–8
Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:4–10
Mary	Luke 1:26–38
The First Disciples	Matthew 4:18–22
Matthew	Matthew 9:9–13
The Samaritan Woman	John 4:4–42
Saul	Acts of the Apostles 9:1–19



© Brooklyn Museum/Corbis

Jesus approached the tax collector Matthew, considered a sinner by many, at his collection booth. "Follow me," Jesus called. How will you answer Jesus' call?



## Right from the Rite

“One of the highest responsibilities of the people of God is to prepare the baptized for confirmation.” (*Rite of Confirmation*, number 3)

## Candidates for Sacraments

You and your peers who are Confirmation candidates are most likely not the only candidates in your parish responding to God’s call by preparing for initiation Sacraments. Parents of babies are preparing to present them for Baptism. Children are getting ready for First Communion. Adults who didn’t complete their initiation when they were young might now be seeking Confirmation. Catechumens, both adults and children older than seven, are seeking to join the Church and are candidates for all three Sacraments of Christian Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

There is also another type of candidate for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. These people are candidates for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. These candidates are already baptized, but not as Catholics. They are Christian and might be Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, or Episcopalian, for example. When these kinds of baptized candidates join the Catholic Church, they usually receive Confirmation and the Eucharist during the same liturgy.

Whether a person is young or old, baptized or unbaptized, Catholic already or just becoming Catholic, Confirmation is an essential part of becoming a full member of the Catholic Church.

Let’s turn now from the different types of candidates and take a look at your Confirmation candidacy.



## The Seven Sacraments

Confirmation is one of the Church's Seven Sacraments. The other six are Baptism, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

The Sacraments bring us face to face with God. We don't literally "see" God in a visual way, but we know he is with us and loves us. We call this relationship with God grace. We encounter grace most fully in the Sacraments. Through grace we participate in God's divine life, the life of the Trinity. It is pure love between the Father and the Son poured out to us by the Holy Spirit. When we celebrate Sacraments with the required disposition, an attitude of openness to God's love, we are able to recognize his presence more clearly. The Sacraments truly make present the graces that they signify. For example, in Baptism, the person really becomes a new creation.

The Sacraments are gifts from Christ, who instituted them. The Gospels show us how he established the meaning of each Sacrament and commissioned his disciples to celebrate them.

The Sacraments fall into three categories:

1. **Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist** are the Sacraments of Christian Initiation because they are the foundation of Christian life. Baptism is the first Sacrament celebrated because it makes us members of Christ and part of the Church. Confirmation strengthens us and is necessary to complete baptismal grace. The Eucharist nourishes us with Christ's Body and Blood and completes Christian initiation. It is the high point of Christian life and all the Sacraments are oriented toward it.
2. **Anointing of the Sick and Penance and Reconciliation** are the Sacraments of Healing because through them the Church continues Jesus' mission to heal and forgive sins.
3. **Holy Orders and Matrimony** are the Sacraments at the Service of Communion. These Sacraments contribute to the Church's mission primarily through service to others.





## Jesus of Nazareth

It was Jesus of Nazareth who called Zacchaeus down from the tree. Jesus wasn't just a regular guy passing through Jericho, but he may have looked like one. He had a human nature, like ours. He experienced pain and joy. He laughed and cried. He went through childhood and all the periods of human development, like us. We can imagine him as a child hanging out with friends and learning carpentry from Joseph.

Jesus is fully man, like all of us, except he did not sin. But that's not all. There is much more to understanding Jesus' identity. He is a divine Person, the second Person of the Trinity, who took on a human nature. That doesn't mean he is half man and half God. "He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], number 464).

## Confirmation During the Teen Years

Most Confirmation candidates in the United States celebrated Baptism as babies and the Eucharist at around age seven or grade two, and then celebrate Confirmation during the middle school or high school years. The celebration follows the Rite of Confirmation. That's what the Church calls the official Confirmation ceremony. The Anointed in the Spirit program will help you prepare by walking you through various parts of the Rite of Confirmation and helping you explore its rich meaning and significance. Our walk-through begins in this chapter with the Presentation of the Candidates.

### Presentation of the Candidates

Confirmation is normally celebrated within the Mass. This helps to show the connection between Confirmation and the other two Sacraments of Christian Initiation, Baptism and the Eucharist. Whether celebrated within or outside of the Mass, however, there is a celebration of the Word, called the Liturgy of the Word, before the Rite of Confirmation. Hearing the Word is very important because the Holy Spirit flows out among all the people gathered and makes God's will known in their lives.

After the proclamation of the Gospel, the Confirmation rite itself begins with the Presentation of the Candidates. The bishop sits down instead of going right into his homily. The candidates

are then presented to the bishop by a leader in the community, such as a priest, deacon, or catechist.

## Called by Name

Each candidate is called by name, if possible. As the priest, deacon, or catechist calls out a person's name, she or he stands. If the group is large, calling each individual name may not be feasible. If each person is not called by name, all the candidates stand before the bishop as a group. However, there is great meaning in being called by name. Let's take a closer look.

How many times a day do you hear your name called? Cameron! Samantha! Austin! Kylie! Who calls you by name? Your mom? your dad? your friends? your teacher? your bus driver? your coach? Hearing your name called means something's up. Your friend wants you to come over. Your dad wants to know if your homework is done. Your mom wants you to hurry up and get in the car! Your coach wants you to get to the ball faster. Your grandmother wants you to know she loves you.

When the Church calls you by name, it means God wants you. God is calling you. Being called by name is personal. You are called out, singled out of the crowd. You are not just part of the pack anymore. God invites you personally into relationship.

Remember how Jesus called Zacchaeus the tax collector by name (see Luke 19:1–10). Zacchaeus was part of a big crowd, watching Jesus from a distance. He climbed a tree so he could

## Words from the Word

**"When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.'" (Luke 19:5)**



© Brooklyn Museum, Purchased by public subscription

Jesus singled out Zacchaeus in a very personal way, calling him by name. Through the Church, God calls you by name in Confirmation.

# Did You Know?

## The State of Grace

Grace is the gift of God's loving presence in our lives. It is the help he gives us through the Holy Spirit to participate in God's life. God wants us to be with him. At Baptism we receive the life of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes love into us. This gift of grace draws us into close relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ and gives us the help we need to become God's adopted sons and daughters.

The Church says that you must be in the "state of grace" to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Nothing we can do will ever stop God from loving us. When we talk about being in the state of grace, we mean being open to God's gift and responding to God's call. It doesn't mean perfect living, free from all sin every day. But to be in the state of grace is to be free from serious sin, the kind that turns us away from God and shows that we have rejected his love. These kinds of sins are

called mortal sins because they bring spiritual death. Less serious sins are called venial sins.

Before receiving Confirmation, the Church asks that you receive the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Through this Sacrament, God forgives your sins. Even if you haven't committed any serious sins' the Sacrament is important for your life. The grace of the Sacrament strengthens our relationship with God and the Church and helps us resist our tendency to sin. The Sacrament helps to prepare Confirmation candidates to receive, with open hearts and minds, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, God's own self will be poured out through the Holy Spirit. You will be filled with the gift of God's loving presence even more than you already are!



see Jesus, and when Jesus approached, he called out to Zacchaeus by name. It was up to Zacchaeus to respond, and he did. His encounter with Jesus changed his life.

When God calls each of us, it is personal. He wants us to respond, and he gives us the grace that enables us to do so.

### **Standing Before the Bishop**

So there you'll be, called by name and standing before the bishop. The bishop is the minister of Confirmation. (We'll talk more about him in chapter 6.)

After you've been called, the bishop will give the homily. He'll explain the Scripture readings and talk about the meaning of Confirmation.

After the homily, the bishop will ask you some questions. But that's for the next chapter. For now let's concentrate on what it means to be a candidate.

### **Being a Candidate**

A candidate is a person preparing for something important. You've been called by God to prepare for Confirmation. It's a big deal. Take it seriously. But also enjoy all the special support from your parish, your sponsor, and your family as you prepare to be confirmed. You won't be a candidate for too long. Confirmation will be here before you know it!



You call all people of  
the earth to yourself.  
You have called me to be a  
candidate for Confirmation.  
Help me to answer your  
call by being the best  
candidate I can possibly be.  
I pray that during this time  
I'll come closer to you and  
your Son, Jesus Christ.  
I pray that the Holy Spirit  
will help me and guide  
me in all I do.  
Amen.

## Responding to the Call

You hear your name called several times a day. But God's call is a bit different. God is calling you to the Sacrament of Confirmation and to a life of Christian discipleship. Read about some of the people from the Bible listed in the "Called by God" sidebar on page 19. Record insights from the Scripture passages that may help you to be a faithful disciple.

# 2 Baptism: Waters of New Life

What comes to your mind when you think about water—swimming, waterslides, a warm bath or shower, walking along the seashore, rainy days, mud puddles, water bottles, water balloons, drinking fountains, fishing, boating? Maybe some less positive things come to mind too, like flooding, hurricanes, stories of people getting caught in strong currents?

## Water Brings Life and Death

Water is a source of life. We drink it every day. It's in our sports drinks and orange juice. It's in most everything we drink and eat, and we need it to survive. We cook with it, bathe with it, and play in it. You've probably heard that approximately two-thirds of the human body is made up of water and that approximately 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water. Water is absolutely essential for life.

At the same time, water can bring destruction, and even death. Thousands of people die each year in drowning accidents. Hurricane Katrina destroyed lives



© Steve Cole/Anyone/amanaimages/Corbis

Cool rainwater on your skin makes you feel alive and free. In what way is the water of Baptism associated with life and freedom?

and homes in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast. Floods, tsunamis, and cyclones kill people and wipe out property all over the world. Severe storms and floods may have done damage not too far from where you live. You may even be a bit frightened when a severe thunderstorm hits your area.

Water can be scary, but it can also be beautiful and enjoyable. A white sandy beach with the sun setting over the water is a magnificent sight. But that same water could take your life.

Water brings us joy, refreshment, and life, but it also can bring death and destruction. The waters of Baptism do the same. They bring both life and death. In Baptism the water is a sacramental symbol that signifies what God does in the Sacrament. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives us new life in Christ and makes us a new creation. We are born anew and made members of Christ's Body, the Church.

Baptismal waters are also associated with destruction. Through Baptism the Holy Spirit destroys sin and death. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the waters of Baptism wash away all sins, both Original Sin and personal sin, as well as the punishment for sin.

© Tony Campbell/istockphoto.com



Water is very powerful and can be destructive. How could new life come forth from the devastation caused by this flood? In Baptism, how does new life come from death?



## Taking a Closer Look at Baptism

In all likelihood, you were baptized as a baby, because in the Catholic Church most people are baptized as infants. Since the early Church, Baptism has been celebrated with young children. We don't wait to baptize at an older age because we don't need to do anything to earn it. God's love is a pure gift to us. Nothing we could do at any age would make us more deserving of this gift than we already are at birth. The Church baptizes children in the faith of the Church with the hope that, as members of God's family, they will learn to love and respond to God.

If you were a baby or young child when you were baptized, ask your family to tell you about your Baptism. Reflecting on your Baptism and its meaning is a helpful step in preparing for Confirmation. Baptism comes first among all the Sacraments. It is the gateway to the Christian life. Let's try to imagine what your Baptism was like and explore its meaning.



### Right from the Rite

"My dear brothers and sisters, God uses the sacrament of water to give his divine life to those who believe in him. Let us turn to him, and ask him to pour his gift of life from this font on the children he has chosen." (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, number 53)



## The Parish Welcomes the Children

First, try to imagine the place you were baptized. Most likely, you were baptized in a church, and it might have been the same church you attend today. Picture yourself arriving at the place of Baptism. Envision your parents, your godmother and godfather, and maybe even your grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, all coming to church with you. Or, maybe it's just you and your mom and a godparent arriving for your Baptism. Imagine your family waiting for the priest to come and greet you.

One of the first things that would have happened at your Baptism is that the priest would have asked some questions. Guess what one of the first questions is? Here's a hint: In chapter 1, we talked about the importance of being called by name. Can you guess the question? It is "What name do you

give your child?" Naming is so incredibly important. Your parents are presenting you to the community. The parish is receiving you by name. And God is claiming you to be his own—by name.

The priest also asks the parents what they are asking on behalf of their child. The parents reply, "Baptism," "faith," or something similar. Then the priest briefly reviews the parents' responsibilities for training their child in the practice of the faith and raising him or her to love God and neighbor. He then asks if they understand and asks the godparents if they are ready to help your parents. Next, the priest traces the cross on your forehead and then invites your parents and godparents to do the same. This signifies your new life in Christ and your new identity as a Christian.

## The Word of God at Baptism

After the welcoming and the signing with the cross comes the Liturgy of the Word. At Baptisms—and at all sacramental celebrations—the proclamation of God’s Word and the homily are very important. Throughout our lives, the hearing of God’s Word helps us to better recognize his love for us and keeps the faith of the Church alive.

Next come the Prayers of the Faithful. The community’s prayers on the day of your Baptism included prayers for you, your family, and your friends. They may have called upon and remembered the saints. A prayer called the Litany of Saints is often prayed or sung during Baptism. The litany asks the saints to pray for us.

## Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing

After the Liturgy of the Word, there is a special prayer asking God to free you from sin. The prayer is called an exorcism.

### Prayer of Exorcism

An exorcism is a prayer for freedom from evil and the power of Satan, its instigator. The sin and evil in our world touch even a pure and innocent young child. So, the priest prays that a child being baptized will be freed from Original Sin (see the “Did You Know?” sidebar on page 32) and asks God to send the Holy Spirit to dwell with her or him.

### An Anointing

Did you know that Baptism can include two anointings with oil? The first is optional, so the priest can omit it if