

All the Good
News that fits
we print

The Sacramental Gazette

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CONFIRMATION NOTES

In Catholic churches in the Eastern Mediterranean (*Eastern Rite*), Confirmation is given by a priest to infants at the same time as baptism.



In Hebrew, the word *Spirit* also means, *Wind* and *Life's Breath*.



Chrism is made from olive oil. Because this can become rancid in aroma, balsam perfume is added.



In the Bible, Confirmation sometimes came before Baptism.

See *Acts 10:44-48*



Chrism is normally blessed by the Bishop during Holy Week.

It is distributed throughout the Diocese as a sign of unity in the Church.



Some Dioceses are now giving the Sacrament of Confirmation before First Communion.

THE SACRAMENTAL GAZETTE IS PUBLISHED BY CATHOLIC1 PUBLISHING, 72 PLEASANT ST., SACO, ME 04072 — THE EDITOR IS FATHER RICHARD LONSDALE, A ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST OF THE DIOCESE OF PORTLAND, MAINE.

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CONFIRMATION: WHY?

Confirmation is the second step in becoming a Catholic. It is a sacrament. This means simply, that it is “sign language” from God. Sign language often speaks more powerfully than any other language. It is universal. In a sacrament, God uses ordinary things like water, food, liniment and actions to speak directly to our souls. Unlike most signs, God’s signs have the power to change the people they reach.

It is the first of what might be called the “Hand-lotion” sacraments. They all use the same signs: a sort of “high-five”, and a liniment or lotion rub

with oil. These sacraments are: **Confirmation**, **Anointing the Sick**, and **Ordination**. All of them use the same signs to say something different.

The “high-five” sign is usually called “**laying on of hands**.” In Baptism, we are welcomed into Jesus. In Confirmation, we are welcomed into a community, the Catholic Church. In most Catholic churches, a bishop gives the sign of welcome. One exception happens when the person is an adult convert. Then the priest who instructs the person should do the Confirmation. The bishop or priest says it with a gesture of his hand. It means “**we respect you, welcome to the family.**”

The “oil rub” sign is sort

of like a lotion massage. It cleans, soothes and heals. In Confirmation, it has a special meaning — **sealing**. Suntan lotion can seal out the harmful rays of the sun. Confirmation **Chrism oil** seals the Holy Spirit in us. The Spirit gives us strength and ideas to complete our merger with Jesus in his body on earth, the Church. The Spirit teaches us how to become Christs.

HOW CONFIRMATION STARTED

If you think of a sacrament as being “sign language,” you can also understand how and why sacraments can change. This is especially true with Confirmation. The message in

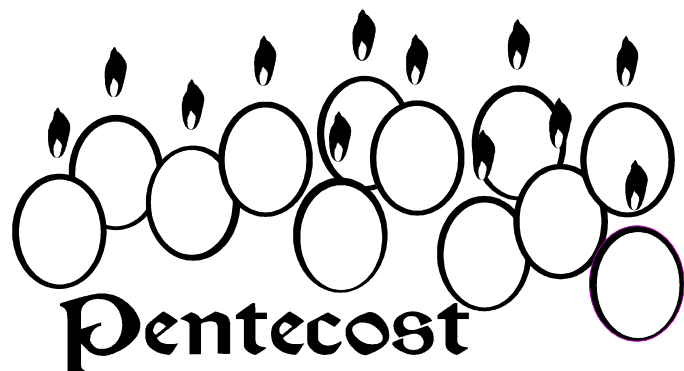


this sacrament is that “God respects you and gives you power to some very hard things.” God can say this in several ways. The present Confirmation ceremony is one of these ways.

The first Confirmation used three other, different, signs: **wind**, **fire** and **speaking in tongues**. It happened during a Jewish holiday almost 2,000 years ago. The celebration was called *Shavuot*. This means “Weeks”. It was held about seven weeks after Passover. Another name for this is **Pentecost**, which means “Fifty days”. It was a sort of Thanksgiving day and also recalled the gift of the **Ten Commandments** to the people of Israel.

Normally, Jesus’ apostles would have gone to the Temple to offer a sacrifice of wheat or barley. But they were afraid of being arrested, like Jesus. So they hid in the room where the

(Continued on page 2)



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 Jesus had celebrated the **Last Supper**.

On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

— Acts 2: 1-4

There would be other experiences where people would suddenly change in the Bible. These changes were always accompanied by zeal, faith and a willing-

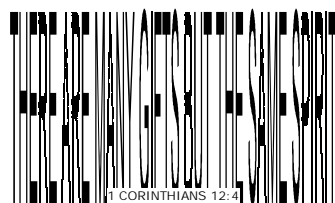
ness to be part of the faith community, the Church.

Each of these events would be shared through different signs throughout Church history. Eventually the Church would settle on the signs now associated with Confirmation.

In the future we may change the signs, but the message and the effect will be the same: a sharing of God's Spirit. The meaning and power of the signs are the most important thing. They are sharing the Holy Spirit of God with us.

GOD'S BARCODE

Can you read it?



WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

Do you know how a computer works? For most people, a computer keyboard is a world of strange symbols and characters. If you don't know anything else, here is one key that you should remember, because it is one of the most important:



If you run into trouble in most programs, you can press this key and instantly a **HELP** window will open with instructions to show you what to do.

You might say that the Holy Spirit is your **personal key** to help in any situation in life. Not only will the Spirit of God show you how to do things, the Spirit will also give you the power to do them.

For example, Jesus told his apostles that if they were ever arrested for their religion, they should not worry about how to give a defense of their actions. The Holy Spirit would give them the right words to say

at their trial. This happened later, just as Jesus had predicted.

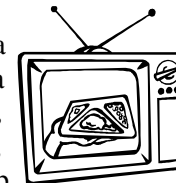
There is a set of initials that has become popular in the last few years. They are **WWJD** — short for **What Would Jesus Do?** This is a good way of judging whether something is OK or would hurt others. Another word for this is **conscience**. Your conscience is that sort of little "voice" inside you that says "Don't do that, it's wrong" or "Go help that person, he is in trouble." That's the **Spirit!**

You don't have to push any button to get this help, it's available for assistance wherever you are.

Whenever you need **help** or advice of any kind, just **ask the Holy Spirit**. Then wait for an answer. It will come into your mind or through another person or through the Church.

SPONSORS

On TV, a sponsor is a person, company, or group who present something to an audience. Their usual goal is to **sell** whatever is presented. Confirmation sponsors also do this, in a way. They present the person to be Confirmed to the Church, represented by the bishop. They are selling your value to the Church community.



Like a TV sponsor, those of the Confirmation candidate must **believe in the person** they present. They are saying, "We respect this person and think that they will be a good member of the Church." The best sponsors are usually the person's **Godparents**.

CONFIRMATION ON THE INTERNET

(Confirmation) <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/sales/youth.htm>

(Confirmation article) <http://www.catholic1.com/confirmation.txt>

(Gifts of the Holy Spirit) <http://www.whiterobedmonks.org/confirm.html>

(Guidelines for Confirmation) <http://www.cbn.org/apology/catholic/ap060100.htm>