



CONFIRMATION: WHAT'S UP?

Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. It is also one of the three Sacraments of Initiation, along with Baptism and Eucharist.

All of the sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders are “efficacious (effective) signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC #1131).

The Church teaches that they are efficacious because Christ Himself does the work in them. It is HE who baptizes, HE who forgives, HE who communicates the grace of each sacrament to the faithful (CCC #1127).

All of the sacraments are important. The purpose of the sacraments are threefold: 1) to sanctify men (make us holy), 2) to build up the Body of Christ (help us evangelize) and 3) to give worship to God (CCC #1123). In fact, the Church teaches us that if we believe in Christ, that the sacraments are “necessary for salvation” (CCC #1129). This means that as Catholics, we need the sacraments in order to reach heaven!

Confirmation specifically helps us by completing the grace we received at baptism (CCC #1285). It can only be received once, because like baptism and holy orders, it confers on our souls a special “seal” which remains forever in us as a sign and help in our spiritual lives (CCC #1121). But most importantly, the Church teaches us the specific purpose of Confirmation, declaring, “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” (CCC #1285). This special strength is the sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit. They are wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord.

Of course, the sacraments aren't magic. They don't miraculously change the way we think, feel or act overnight. As in all things, God's grace is powerful and inviting. We must learn to cooperate with grace in order for real change to occur in our lives. Since we have received this grace, however, the Church teaches us that, “the Confirmed, as true witnesses of Christ, are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (CCC #1285).

Confirmation is a serious step in the life of every Christian. It is a personal acknowledgment of our dependence on God's grace and a personal decision to humbly ask and prepare to receive this wonderful gift from God—this gift that

will help us attain eternal life.

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