

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Pentecost Sunday • Year C • June 8, 2025



*Father of light,
giver of every good gift,
send your Holy Spirit
into our hearts
that we might
weave your love
into our words and deeds
and become
a heavenly leaven
for this world.
Amen.*

Sunday Word

Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Romans 8:8-17

John 20:19-23 or John 14:15-16, 23b-26

One Proclamation

The Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples at Pentecost. Boldly empowered by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, they become Apostles of Jesus Christ. They proclaim the message of Salvation in many different languages, but it is one and the same message that is being proclaimed.

One Body

Saint Paul teaches that just as the parts of the body, though many, are one, so it is also with Christ and his Body, the Church. It is the one Spirit, the Holy Spirit—into whom we were baptized—who recreates us into the Body of Christ. We live, then, in this Spirit, who casts out fear and promotes the freedom of the adopted sons and daughters of God.

One Teaching

Jesus taught during his earthly ministry, and his teaching continues through the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is a holy teaching, permeated by the gift of peace and forgiveness. It is a vibrant teaching filled with love.

Catholic Teaching: The Gifts of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation

On this Sunday, which closes the fifty days of the Easter season, the Church celebrates the conferral of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered Apostles. The Sacrament of Confirmation perpetuates this grace by which new members of the Church, in the context of their initiation journey, are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of this sealing is to strengthen them so that they may witness to Christ. This faithful witness builds up the Body of Christ in love. Like Baptism, those who are confirmed are also marked with the special character, or seal, of the Lord such that this sacrament cannot be repeated.

There are different pastoral practices within the Church that affect the timing or sequence of celebrating this initiation

sacrament. For those baptized as infants, this sacrament is sometimes delayed until after the reception of first Eucharist. For those baptized as adults, this sacrament is celebrated with the reception of first Eucharist. At whatever age this sacrament is celebrated, it completes baptismal grace, for the Spirit is received at Baptism. One is strengthened in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation and is enriched for the tasks of witnessing to the faith and bound more closely to Christ.

As described in Sacred Scripture, the Spirit descends upon Jesus, the Messiah, at his own Baptism in the Jordan by John (see Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:33-34). But the fullness of the Holy Spirit was not meant for only the Messiah. It is intended for the entire people claimed for God by Jesus, who promises that this outpouring of the Spirit (see Luke 12:12, John 3: 5-8; 7:37-39; 16:7-15, and Acts 1:8) would be the gift he would send to his Church.

In the early history of the Church, the laying on of hands was recognized as the essential sign of the Sacrament of Confirmation. An anointing with Chrism on the forehead was soon added to this ritual action. Hence this sacrament in the Eastern churches goes by the name of *Chrismation*. A Christian—one who carries the name of Christ as his follower—is anointed just as the Messiah was anointed. Jesus declared that he was marked with his Father's seal (see John 6:27).

Scripturally, anointing with oil is a sign of joy and abundance. It cleanses, as before and after a bath, and makes muscles more limber, as in the anointing of wrestlers and athletes. In the ancient world, it is also a sign of healing whereby bruises and wounds are soothed. Anointing was also perceived as a cosmetic applied to improve beauty. Anointing in the Sacrament of Confirmation has all these meanings. Thus, the confirmed, strengthened by the Spirit, give off the beautiful aroma of Christ in their lives.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Rite of Confirmation proclaims the lavishness of God's love by specifically enumerating seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out in the sacrament: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe.

Key Terms

ANOINTING

Symbolic of the Holy Spirit, who "anointed" Jesus as Messiah. The name *Christ* (in Hebrew, *Messiah*) means "the one anointed." Anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation. Other ritual anointings also form part of the rites of the Catechumenate and the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders. Altars and the walls of church buildings are also anointed (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 695).

CHRISM

Perfumed oil, which is consecrated by the bishop. It is used in the Sacrament of Confirmation and signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit. Chrism is also used in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1291).

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Permanent dispositions that enable us to be receptive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The traditional list of seven gifts derives from Isaiah 11:1-3: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1830).

Voices of Faith

This was why the Lord had promised to send the Advocate: he was to prepare us as an offering to God. Like dry flour, which cannot become one lump of dough, one loaf of bread, without moisture, we who are many could not become one in Christ Jesus without the water that comes down from heaven. . . . Through the baptism that liberates us from change and decay we have become one in body; through the Spirit we have become one in soul.

—Saint Irenaeus

We do not see [the Risen Lord] with our eyes but we see that wherever Jesus is, people change, they improve. A greater capacity for peace, for reconciliation . . . is created. Therefore, we do not see the Lord himself but we see the effects of the Lord: so we can understand that Jesus is present.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1287 (a messianic people and the Holy Spirit), 1288 (laying on of hands as origin of Confirmation), 1289 (anointing and Confirmation), 1296 (the seal of the Holy Spirit)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Chapter 16 (Confirmation: Consecrated for Mission), especially the section entitled "The Liturgy of Confirmation," pages 204–207

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church

265 (Confirmation in the divine plan of Salvation), 267 (the essential aspects of the rite of Confirmation)