

# BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION



## Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you willed to be baptized by John in the Jordan River and you instructed your disciples to baptize all nations. Send down your Holy Spirit upon us as we contemplate the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, which conforms us closer to your image, so that we may be more faithful disciples of you. We ask this in your most holy Name. Amen.

## Scripture Reading *Romans 6:3-11*

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul is exhorting the Christian community to not forget the meaning and the significance of their baptism, namely that when a person is baptized, he or she shares in Christ's death and resurrection, enabling the person to be joined with Christ and become a child of God, which cannot be undone.

## What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

- The Sacraments of Initiation can be more clearly understood when they are celebrated at one time.
  - **Baptism:** We become reborn by the Holy Spirit into the Paschal Mystery of Christ.
  - **Confirmation:** We become identified with Christ so closely that our offering is the offering of Christ in the Eucharist.
  - **Eucharist:** We become participants in the Paschal Mystery and become a part of the history of salvation.

## What is the history of Baptism & Confirmation in the Church?

- In the early Church, catechumens were baptized to be initiated into the Christian community as commanded by Jesus:
  - "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5).
  - "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).
- In the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples would lay hands over some of the baptized, praying for the Holy Spirit, which is understood to be the sacrament of Confirmation (Acts 8:17).
- With the rise of infant baptism in the fifth century, the post-baptismal anointing and hand laying performed by the bishop were separated from the sacrament of Baptism in the West.
- In a fourth century document, Confirmation by the bishop was a gateway to join the community at the Eucharistic celebration after being baptized in private by a deacon.
- In 1905, Pope Pius X lowered the minimum age for First Communion, thereby universally displacing the order of the Sacraments of Initiation in the West.



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### What are the effects of Baptism?

- “Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception or at least by desire, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words. Through Baptism, men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church” (Canon Law 849).
- The effects of baptism are:
  - Brings us into a new living relationship with God, with Christ, and with the Church.
  - Gives us membership in the Body of Christ and unites us with all Christians.
  - A rebirth into goodness and a death to sin.
  - The hope of rising to a new life.
  - The ability to participate in the Sacraments and receive God’s grace.

### What are the symbols of Baptism?

- **Holy Water:** The sign in which the Spirit is present and brings about rebirth in Christ.
- **Immersion:** Dying and Rising with Christ
- **Holy Oils:** **Oil of the Catechumen** for strengthening, **Chrism** for anointing.
- **Lit Candle:** Light of Christ
- **White Garment:** Purity

### What are the effects of Confirmation?

- The sacrament of Confirmation strengthens the baptized and obliges them more firmly to be witnesses of Christ by word and deed and to spread and defend the faith. It imprints a character, enriches by the gift of the Holy Spirit the baptized continuing on the path of Christian initiation, and binds them more perfectly to the Church” (Canon Law 879).
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace.
- 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. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. (CCC 1285)
- The effects of Confirmation are:
  - Seals and completes Baptism.
  - Unites us more firmly to Christ.
  - Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us.
  - Renders our bond with the Church more perfect.
  - Gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith.
- The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”