



Carmelite Spiritual Center

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Life is Worth Giving

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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If the average Catholic, a senior citizen or otherwise, were asked the question: "Who is God?" --- he or she would probably answer by referring to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It would be a rare person who would also refer to God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

There might, of course, be some exceptions, since in recent decades the Charismatic Movement has helped to put a greater focus on the Holy Spirit. And this same Spirit comes in for additional attention during the preparation of the Sacrament of Confirmation ceremony or the Feast of Pentecost at the average Catholic parish.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is often referred to as the "Forgotten Person/God" of the Holy Trinity. The identity and understanding of God the Father and God the Son seem to be quite clear in the New Testament when Jesus Christ went to great lengths to explain the relationship between Himself as the Son of God and God the Father.

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Jesus Christ ^(NEEDED) ~~was~~ ^(Go To) to great lengths to explain the relationship between Himself as the Son of God and God the Father. This idea was more than difficult for the Jewish people who were basically monotheists (one God) people who worshipped only God the Father under the name Jahweh ("I Am Who Am" in Hebrew).

Many, however, came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. And when He was about to return to God the Father in Heaven, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon his disciples so that they would be spiritually enlightened to understand all the great truths of the religion often referred to simply as Christianity.

New Testament References

Although the New Testament does not record when Jesus actually began the Sacrament of Confirmation, which is basically the coming of the Holy Spirit to a bapt^{iz}ed Christian in a special way, the Acts of the Apostles record instances of the early disciples being sent to impose hands and to anoint newly-baptized Christians so that they would be not only members of the new Christian Community, but also be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this way they would be similar to the original disciples on the first Pentecost.

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In this way, the newly-confirmed Christians would not only be able to live their new Faith more fully but also have the courage to go out to all the world to preach belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And this they did throughout the Roman Empire and eventually to the world.

In some parts of the Church, this imposition of hands and an anointing was associated with Baptism itself with Confirmation at the same time. In our Catholic Faith, a separate ceremony evolved which is called simply the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is bestowed on young adults, usually, to confirm them in their Faith that they received at Baptism formally. It also enables them to understand their Faith more fully, and to live ^{it} in courageously as they enter their teen years and adult life.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

One of the more important aspects of Confirmation is the bestowal of what are referred to as the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit." Again, these are aids that people need to live their Faith life more fully, especially when the difficulties and temptations of adult life bring Faith problems into their experience. They are, indeed, good and precious gifts.

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The gifts are: 1) Wisdom (which helps the Confirmed person to greater knowledge of things of the Spirit; 2) Understanding (a help to comprehend the things of life in relationship to eternity; 3) Counsel (it helps us to tell people things that will aid them in their relationship to God); 4) Fortitude (a gift which gives a person the strength of mind to proceed in life with courage to do the right and good thing; 5) Knowledge (a gift which helps us to know the truths of God even when they are unsearchable by the human mind); 6) Piety (loyalty to the cause of God; and 7) Fear of the Lord (a gift which enables a person to have a reverential respect for God).

Questions to Ask:

1) Try to recall during the recent past when you felt that you encountered the Holy Spirit in your relationship to God, yourself or others.

2) Try to imagine, as a Confirmed Christian, a place or a time in which it would be impossible to encounter the Holy Spirit.

3) What image of the Holy Spirit gives you the best sense of the presence of God in your life?

4) Try to draw your own favorite image of the Holy Spirit at work in the world.