



# CONFIRMATION

IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## DEFINITION OF A SACRAMENT

"An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

Sacraments make real the love and grace of God.

## THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

1. Holy Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Holy Eucharist
4. Marriage
5. Confession
6. Unction (*Anointing of Sick*)
7. Ordination

## What Is Confirmation?

Confirmation is the sacramental rite in which the candidates "express a mature commitment to Christ and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop" (BCP, p. 860). Those who were baptized at an early age and those baptized as adults without laying on of hands by a bishop are expected to make a mature public affirmation of their faith, recommit themselves to the responsibilities of their baptism, and receive laying on of hands by a bishop (BCP, p. 412). Adults baptized with the laying on of hands by a bishop are considered to be confirmed.

The Prayer Book rite for Confirmation includes forms for Reception and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. Those who have already made a mature Christian commitment in another denomination are recognized as members of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and received into the fellowship of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Those who have returned from a time of religious inactivity to an active practice of faith or those who wish to renew their faith may reaffirm their baptismal vows during the Confirmation Mass. Reaffirmation may be repeated as often as desired, depending on the pastoral needs of the person. Preparation for Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation should help the candidates discover the meaning of Christian commitment in their lives and explore ways that their Christian commitment can be lived.

Confirmation preparation will explore faith through the lenses of the baptismal covenant, the Creeds, the Catechism, Church history, the Prayer Book, and Holy Scripture. The goals

of the classes are to help grow a mature faith that is lived out through worship, prayer, evangelism, and mission. That is, after all, the root of our baptismal faith.

Confirmation is rooted in the baptismal covenant. At their confirmation, candidates reaffirm their renunciation of evil, and renew their commitment to Jesus Christ. They reaffirm the promises made by them or for them at the time of baptism. Those present in the congregation promise to do all in their power to support the candidates in their life in Christ. The bishop leads the congregation in renewing the baptismal covenant. The bishop lays hands on each candidate for Confirmation. The Prayer Book provides specific prayers to be said by the bishop for Confirmation, for Reception, and for Reaffirmation.

The Episcopal Church's theology of Confirmation has continued to evolve along with its understanding of baptism. Confirmation is no longer seen as the completion of Christian initiation, nor is Confirmation a prerequisite for receiving communion. Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's body the church (BCP, p. 298). Accordingly, Confirmation is to be understood in terms of a mature, public reaffirmation of the Christian faith and the baptismal promises.



### Questions for Reflection

- ❖ What does the sacrament of Confirmation mean to you?
- ❖ Why do you think it is important to be a part of a faith community?
- ❖ How can you become more a part of the faith community as you prepare for Confirmation?
- ❖ What is a gift you can bring to your parish faith community?

### For Personal Study

- ❖ Read the liturgy of Confirmation (Prayer Book, p. 413) in preparation for our discussion during our second class.
- ❖ The Baptismal Covenant (p. 416-417) includes five questions. How important is the first question in your being able to fulfill the remaining four?

*You can find an online version of the Book of Common Prayer at [WWW.BCPONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.BCPONLINE.ORG)*