

Confirmed in
discipleship

Do you sometimes feel that you don't belong or that you don't fit in with a particular group? Are you looking for a place where you can be yourself? What would that place be like? Who would be there with you?

"We ask you Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life."

—*Rite of Baptism*

Gathered Together as God's People

"I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back to your own soil. I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them. You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God."

Ezekiel 36:24–28

Understanding Scripture

If you have ever felt homesick, you know how lonely and discouraging it can be. In the Scripture passage above, the prophet Ezekiel writes to the Israelites, who are living far from home and feeling removed from God.

God had promised to take care of the Israelites if they obeyed him. But because they refused to follow his plan, their Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and they were forced to live in the distant land of Babylon.

Ezekiel is God's messenger to the Israelites. Through him, God promises the Israelites that they will become his people again and return home. He will forgive their sins and fill their hearts with his Spirit so that they become a new people.

Scripture and You

Being born with Original Sin means that we have been born in exile, apart from God. Like the Israelites, we sometimes choose not to obey God. Then we feel far from the place where God wants us to be. We are subject to ignorance, suffering, and death. Ezekiel's words remind us that God keeps his promises and is always ready to bring us back to him. God does this in the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

REFLECTING ON GOD'S WORD



Take a moment to rest peacefully in God's presence. Hear his words from the prophet Ezekiel. Of what do you want to be washed clean? What distractions keep you from worshiping God alone? Pray that you will be open to the Holy Spirit, so that your heart may be filled with God's love. Thank God for the Spirit he has given you to help you follow his plan. Take a few moments to listen to God and to speak to him about whatever you would like.

God Calls a People— The Church

God is always inviting us to be part of his family. Like he did with the Israelites, God also made a promise, or covenant, with Abraham and Sarah. He asked them to leave their home and family for a land that he would give them. In return for this sacrifice, God promised that Abraham would become the leader of a great nation of God's people.

Centuries later, God made another covenant. He asked Moses to give his commandments to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. There the Israelites promised to obey God's commandments, and in return, he promised to care for them and be their God.

God has made a new covenant with us through Jesus, his Son. At the Last Supper, Jesus took a cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." (Luke 22:20)

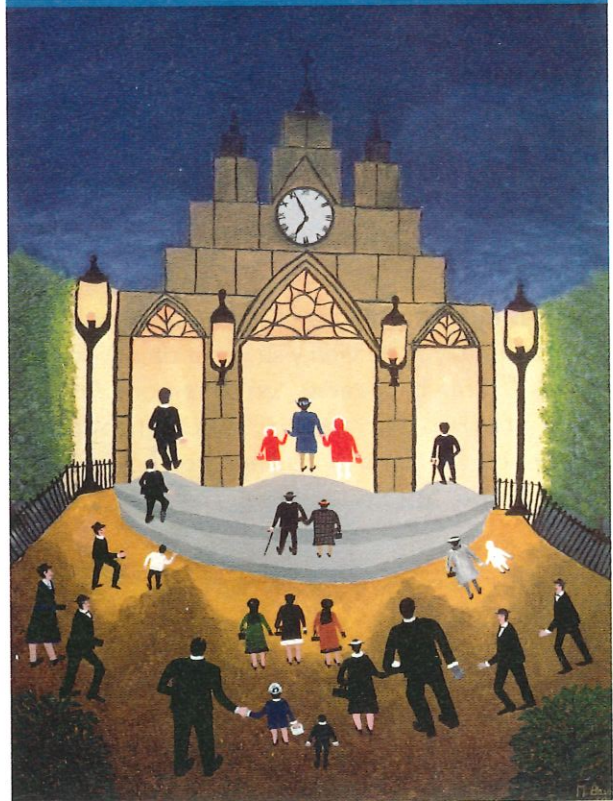
By his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, Jesus formed a new community. This new community, his Church, was made up of people who believed in him, followed his teaching, and kept his commandment of loving God and one another. People who follow Jesus are called **disciples**.

On Pentecost, God the Father and Jesus his Son sent the Holy Spirit to fill the disciples with the Spirit's grace. The disciples then told the Good News of Jesus to everyone present. Though the people came from different places and spoke many different languages, the power of the Holy Spirit allowed them to understand the disciples in their own languages. That day three thousand people were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church was alive. (Acts of the Apostles 2:1–13,41)

A Spirit-Filled Community

Brought to life and animated by the Spirit, the believers were formed into a community with four characteristics.

ART LINK



Evensong, Margaret Baird, oil on board, 1972.

Visperas, Margaret Baird, óleo sobre tabla, 1972.

- **Community**—living and praying together; sharing common bonds
- **Message**—learning from the Apostles; proclaiming the Good News
- **Worship**—praying in the Temple; breaking bread as Jesus did
- **Service**—loving one another; caring for the poor

The Church Blossoms

The Church grew as the word about Jesus spread. People who wanted to belong to the Christian community prepared to enter the Church at the annual celebration of Jesus' Death and Resurrection during the Easter Vigil.

These soon-to-be Christians descended into a pool of water to signify dying with Christ, giving up their old way of life, and being born anew in Christ. They were baptized "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The bishop laid hands on them and anointed them with oil, confirming, strengthening, and perfecting the Holy Spirit's presence in them. Their initiation was completed when they received the Eucharist for the first time.



In the Eastern Church, Confirmation is celebrated immediately after an infant is baptized and is followed by participation in the Eucharist. Over the course of time, Confirmation and Eucharist became separated from Baptism in the Western Church. Recently the Western Church has emphasized the unity of the Sacraments of Initiation by bringing back the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)**. In this rite, adults learn what it means to be a baptized disciple of Jesus—to follow his teachings and to live them every day. Adults are initiated into the Church by celebrating all three sacraments at the Easter Vigil.

Initiation Today

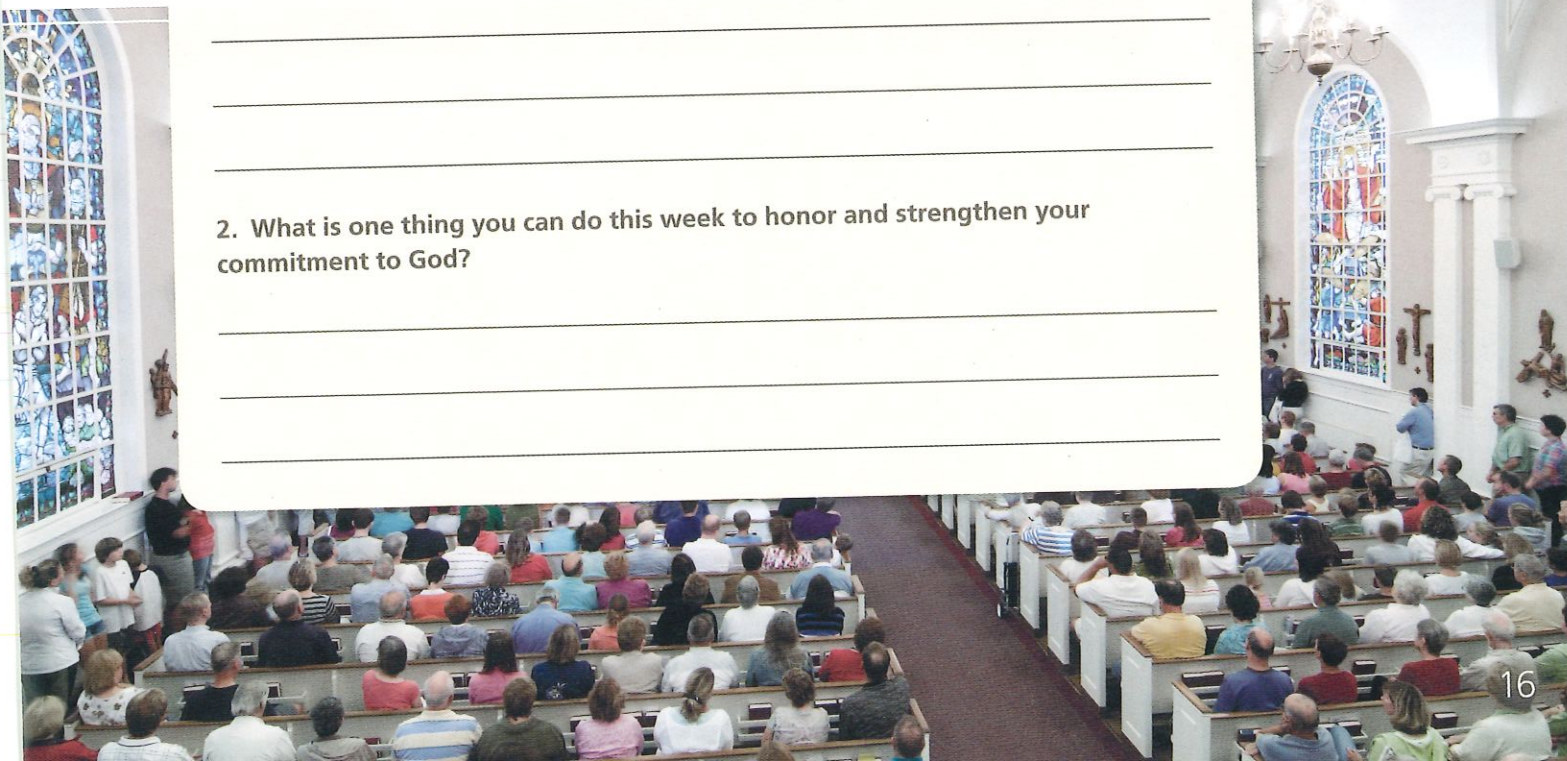
When a baby is born into a family, it is a special occasion. In the same way, when someone becomes a member of God's family, the Church welcomes him or her through the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

MY TURN

Committed to Christ

1. How have you noticed your commitment to God growing as you get older?

2. What is one thing you can do this week to honor and strengthen your commitment to God?



Although your celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are probably years apart, they are closely related. First of all, they are **sacraments**, powerful signs of grace given to the Church by Christ. Divine life, or grace, is given to us through them. The sacraments are the most important signs of God's presence in your life. They help you realize that there is more to life than simply satisfying your own desires. They make present the grace you need to use your time, talent, and energy for the benefit of God and others.

Baptism

We are learning that the Sacraments of Initiation welcome us into the Church. In Baptism, the first sacrament we celebrate, we are freed from **Original Sin** and born into new life in Jesus.

Baptism is a sign of God's covenant with us. It's an agreement in which God promises to be with us always and to help us build our relationships with him and others. When we accept this covenant, we promise God that we will try to be like Jesus, his model of what it means to be a person for others.

In addition to forming a covenant between God and us, Baptism makes us an adopted son or

daughter of God and a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. Baptism marks us permanently as Christians and allows us to share in the priesthood of Jesus, the common priesthood to which all believers belong. United with him in his priesthood, we exhibit the grace of Baptism in all areas of our life—personal, family, social, and as members of the Church—and live out the call to holiness, which is addressed to all the baptized.

The new life we receive in Baptism is called **sanctifying grace**. This grace takes away Original Sin; it helps us love God, believe in him, and hope in him. It also helps us follow the Holy Spirit, who guides us to live the life God calls us to live.

MY TURN

Being a Disciple

What does it mean to you to be a baptized disciple of Jesus?



Confirmation

You are preparing to celebrate Confirmation, the second Sacrament of Initiation. This time of preparation gives you the opportunity to look carefully at the direction of your life. You need to make decisions every day, and the steady stream of difficult choices can be confusing. This confusion can lead you to question how God is involved in your life or whether he's involved at all.

As we saw in the Scripture passage that began this chapter, God wants to renew us, forgive our sins, and give us hearts full of his Spirit. We will not be alone as we prepare for the difficult decisions of life.

In Confirmation you affirm your baptismal promises. The Sacrament of Confirmation seals your Baptism and reinforces the life-giving gifts you received in Baptism. Confirmation brings you closer to Christ, strengthens the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, unites you more closely to the Church, and helps you follow Jesus' example in your words and actions.

In Confirmation, as in Baptism, you are marked with a permanent character, or seal. Because of this seal, you can only be baptized and confirmed once. Just as you can never stop being someone's brother, sister, or cousin, you can never stop being a child of God once you are baptized.

Eucharist

The Eucharist is the very heart of Catholic life and the greatest prayer we can offer God. This gift from Jesus nourishes and strengthens the community of believers by word and sacrament. At the Eucharist we are most completely the Church. We are God's people, celebrating God's goodness, being redeemed, and sharing God's love. Participation in the Eucharist completes Christian initiation. By receiving it, we continually renew our participation in Christ's saving Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

rite



Rite

During the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, you renew your baptismal promises and profess your faith.

Meaning

Confirmation increases and deepens the grace you received at Baptism.

Daily Life

Every time we mirror the life of Christ in our words and deeds, we are living our baptismal promises.

Life of Faith

We recommit to the life of Christ and are strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit.



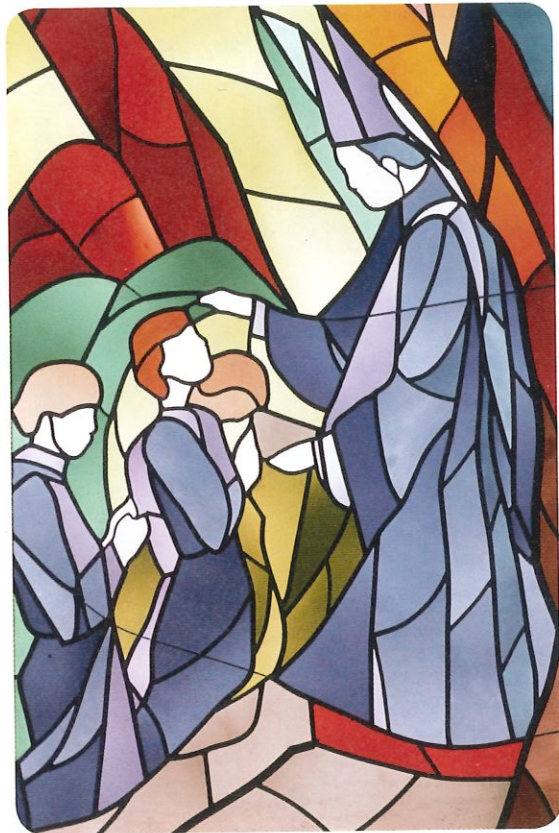
A Closer Look at Confirmation

We all use words and actions to communicate with others. In a similar way, words and actions are signs of what is happening in the sacraments. The signs of Confirmation are the laying on of hands, anointing of the forehead with oil by the bishop, and the words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

Anointed with Oil

Just as in Baptism and ordination, oil is used to anoint the newly confirmed. It is called **Chrism**—perfumed oil blessed by the bishop during Holy Week.

Anointing with oil is an ancient ritual that sets someone apart for a special mission. In Israel, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed. As we learned in Chapter 1, both *Christ* and *Messiah* come from words that mean "anointed one."



MY TURN The Laying on of Hands

In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands was a powerful sign of blessing. In the New Testament, hands healed and called down the Spirit. Read the following Scripture passages and write what happens as a result of the laying on of hands.

1. Numbers 27:18–23

2. Luke 4:40

3. Acts of the Apostles 19:4–6

4. 1 Samuel 16:11–13



Centering on Jesus

Are you ready to live your life as a disciple of Jesus? If so, here are some ways you can do it:

- **Pray and celebrate the sacraments.** The Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation increase your love for Jesus.
- **Live the Gospel.** Forming habits of Christian living and serving members of your community help you put your faith into action.
- **Study the faith.** You will grow as a faithful Christian through study, reflection, and by sharing your faith with others.
- **Turn to Catholics for support and guidance.** Your parents, sponsors, pastor, catechist, members of your parish, and friends preparing for Confirmation with you will help you prepare to follow Christ together.

Your Sponsor

A **sponsor** will be an important part of your preparation for Confirmation. At your Baptism your parents chose two sponsors for you. Confirmation seals your Baptism. Therefore, you may choose one of your baptismal sponsors as your Confirmation sponsor, or you may choose another person. Your pastor or catechist will explain to you what is required of your sponsor.

Choosing a Sponsor

Here's how a classified ad requesting a Confirmation sponsor might read.

CONFIRMATION SPONSOR WANTED

Sponsor wanted to help Confirmation candidate live his or her baptismal promises. Must be willing to share faith life with candidate, be an example of Christian living, represent the Church by supporting candidate, pray with candidate, challenge him or her to live a Christian life, and present candidate to minister of Confirmation. Must be a practicing Catholic, at least 16 years old, and fully initiated by Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. Pay: immeasurable.

This may sound like a job few people could fulfill. But you will eventually find a worthy sponsor through prayer, careful thought, and conversations with your parents or other significant adults in your life.

Your sponsor will be someone who will walk with you and offer you guidance as you prepare for Confirmation. On your day of Confirmation, he or she will literally stand behind you and confidently present you to the bishop as a person ready to be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Read the ad with your parents and talk with them who would be a good sponsor for you. Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and then discuss the responsibilities with the person you have selected.



1 WITNESS



Bishop and Everyman: Saint John Neumann

John Neumann (1811–1860), fourth bishop of Philadelphia, was the first American bishop to be declared a saint. Born in the present-day Czech Republic, he came to the United States in 1835 and was ordained in 1836. In 1852 Neumann was appointed bishop of Philadelphia at a very difficult time. An anti-Catholic political party was setting fire to Catholic schools and convents. Neumann was not deterred by these threats. By 1860 he had established over two hundred Catholic schools. He also established new parishes at the rate of almost one every month. Speaking German, Italian, and English, Neumann was very popular with immigrants, whose dignity as children of God he always respected. People loved hearing the Gospel in their own language. John Neumann was declared a saint in 1977; his feast day is January 5.

2 ACT

Dignity of Human Life

As children of God, we all possess dignity, and we should always treat one another with dignity. God has imprinted his own image and likeness on each of us as human beings and has given us the gift of an incomparable dignity. In the Incarnation, God the Son has taken on our humanity by uniting divine nature with human nature in one Person. Because of the Incarnation, the guiding principle of Catholic Social Teaching is the dignity of the human person. The U.S. bishops have insisted that every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or destroys the dignity of the human person.

3 PRAY

Call to Prayer

The Sacraments of Initiation lay the foundation for our lives as Catholics. Through these sacraments we become full members of the Church. Ask God to be with you and guide you on your journey toward Confirmation.

pray

Grace-Filled Prayer

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: We have learned about the three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Now, gathered as a community of believers, let us listen to God, speaking to us in his Word today and always.

"I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back to your own soil. I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them. You will live in the land I gave to your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God."

Ezekiel 36:24–28

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Now let us offer our prayers to God, who offers us new life. That all of us who have been brought to new life in Baptism may always give thanks to God for his life in us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: That as we prepare to celebrate our Confirmation, we may grow in understanding and living our faith.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: That our participation in the Eucharist may nourish the new life we received in Baptism.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: As Catholics we believe that being born again is the transforming grace we received in Baptism. This grace is with us throughout our lives, helping us turn away from sin and toward God. For this let us give thanks to God.

All: Loving God, through the Sacraments of Initiation, we are given new life in your grace. Thank you for giving us the grace to deepen our relationship with you.
Amen.

summary

FAITH SUMMARY

Through the Sacraments of Initiation, we become members of the Church who continue the mission of the Church.

REMEMBER

What are the Sacraments of Initiation?

The Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. We are born in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, and nourished by the Eucharist.

What are the effects of Baptism?

Baptism is necessary for Salvation. It is our birth into new life in Christ. It frees us from Original Sin and gives us new life in Jesus. It forms a covenant between God and us, in which God promises to be with us always and to help us grow in faith. Baptism gives us sanctifying grace—new life that helps us love God and hope in him.

What does Confirmation do for us?

Confirmation seals our Baptism and deepens baptismal grace. It unites us more firmly to Christ, strengthens the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, brings us closer to the Church, and encourages us to witness to Christ in all circumstances in word and action.

Words to Know

Chrism	sacrament
disciple	sanctifying grace
Original Sin	sponsor
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)	

What are four characteristics of the faith community formed by the Holy Spirit?

Four characteristics of the faith community are community, message, worship, and service.

MY CONFIRMATION JOURNAL


Use your journal to enter more deeply into this chapter. Quietly spend time reflecting and recording on journal pages 11–20.

REACH OUT

1. The words of the anointing are based on the practice of stamping something for identification. In the past, letters and documents were sealed with hot wax. A person's seal was pressed into the wax, leaving an imprint. In Confirmation, God marks you as his own. You are called to receive God's mark and authorized to act as his disciple. Draw what God's seal might look like. Then write a description of it.
2. Research your parish community and write about it. Explain how it was founded and how it got its name. Describe how large the parish is, the variety of people who belong to it, and its major activities.

WITH MY SPONSOR

Arrange with your sponsor to share your insights, questions, and ideas from this chapter and how they relate to your conversations from the *Faith to Faith* magazine.



*Loving God,
thank you for
the grace to
follow you and
the strength to
turn away from
sin. Amen.*

review

WITNESS, PAST AND PRESENT

Read the passages below from the Acts of the Apostles, and write the letter of the characteristic of the Church lived by these early Christians. There may be more than one.

- a. message
- b. community
- c. worship
- d. service

- _____ 1. Acts 2:44–45
- _____ 2. Acts 4:34–35
- _____ 3. Acts 8:5–8
- _____ 4. Acts 13:14–18
- _____ 5. Acts 2:42

AN EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

Complete the sentences. If you finish them correctly, the boxed letters will spell an important event involving the Holy Spirit.

1. At the Last _____ Jesus formed a new covenant with his blood.
2. By his Death, _____, and Ascension, Jesus formed a group of people who followed his teaching and kept his commandment of love.
3. The _____ are signs of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives.
4. _____ marks us as Christians.
5. Sanctifying _____ helps us follow the directions of the Holy Spirit.
6. We promise to try to be like Jesus when we accept God's _____.
7. The Sacrament of _____ strengthens the gifts we receive in Baptism.

8. _____ is the oil used in Baptism and Confirmation.
9. _____ the faith will help you grow closer to God.

What is the event? _____

EZEKIEL PUZZLER

Complete the crossword puzzle about the Scripture passage you read from the Book of Ezekiel.

Across

5. similar to laws or rules
6. pumps life to the body

Down

1. a cleansing liquid
2. another word for *lands*
3. to make clean
4. received with a new heart

