

Diocese of Harrisburg Confirmation Question & Answer Sheet

Note: The answers contained herein are designed for those who are members of the Latin rite. Some of the answers would vary for those in the Eastern Churches.

1. What is Confirmation?

A. Confirmation is the sacrament by which 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. The reception of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace (cf. CCC 1285).

2. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is an efficacious sign (*efficacious sign* means, it is a sign that works) of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (CCC Glossary, *Sacrament*).

3. How many sacraments are there?

A. There are seven sacraments (CCC 1210).

4. Who instituted the sacraments?

A. Jesus instituted all seven sacraments and the roots of all of the sacraments are found in Sacred Scripture (CCC 1210).

5. What are the sacraments of Initiation and how many are there?

A. The Sacraments of Initiation are the sacraments that fully lay the foundations of every Christian life. There are three sacraments of initiation and they are: Baptism (being born anew in Christ), Confirmation (strengthening for the Christian life), and the Eucharist (the food of eternal life) (cf. CCC 1212).

6. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is the 3rd Person of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son and with the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He is fully God. He is the Spirit of Love and Truth. He is our Advocate and our Consoler. He also helps us to pray as we ought. We should frequently ask the Holy Spirit for His guidance and to help us to lead good Catholic lives (CCC 687 – 693).

7. What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit?

A. The 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit are: Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord.

Wisdom – The gift that enables us to see the world from God’s viewpoint, which can help us come to grasp the purpose and plan of God.

Knowledge – The gift that directs us to contemplation, or thoughtful reflection on the mystery of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as well as of the mysteries of the Catholic faith.

Understanding – The gift that stimulates us to work on knowing ourselves as part of our growth in knowing God.

Counsel – The gift that helps us to sense the quiet teaching that the Holy Spirit gives us about our moral lives and about the training of our consciences.

Piety – The gift that leads us to reverence and devotion toward God. The Holy Spirit gives us this gift in the Mass, as well as through popular devotions and piety.

Fortitude – The gift that gives us the strength to stand up for Christ and the Gospel when challenged.

Fear of the Lord – The gift that ensures wonder and awe before the majesty of God. It also imparts an attitude of grateful wonder that God loves us and that we can share in His divine life.

Note: The information for these definitions for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is taken from pages 208-209 of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

- 8. When are the gifts of the Holy Spirit received?**
 - A. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are first received into our souls in Baptism and then are deepened in Confirmation (CCC 1266, 1303).

- 9. What are the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit?**
 - A. The 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit are: Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-Control, and Chastity (CCC 1832).

- 10. What is Pentecost?**
 - A. Pentecost Sunday occurred 50 days after our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Easter Sunday and 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended in tongues as of fire on the disciples of Jesus who were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. When He descended upon them, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples a special outpouring of His gifts and graces, including the grace to boldly and courageously witness to the Lord Jesus and His teachings in the world (cf. Acts of the Apostles 2:1-41, CCC 696, 2693).

- 11. What does the word Confirmation mean?**
 - A. The word Confirmation means *strengthening* or *to make firm*.

- 12. What is the essential sign/rite of Confirmation?**
 - A. The essential sign of Confirmation is the anointing with Sacred Chrism on the forehead of the candidate by the minister of the sacrament who pronounces the words, *Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit* (CCC 1320).

- 13. What is Chrism?**
 - A. Chrism is olive oil mixed with balsam and consecrated by the bishop at the diocesan Chrism Mass during Holy Week. Chrism is used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and altars (cf. CCC Glossary, *Chrism*).

- 14. Who is the minister of Confirmation?**
 - A. The ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop, though a priest may be delegated by the bishop to confirm (CCC 1312 – 14).

15. Who may receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

A. Those who are baptized but not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. To receive Confirmation, one must profess the faith, be in the state of grace, have the intention of receiving the sacrament, and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the Church and in temporal affairs. (1306–07, 1319). In the Diocese of Harrisburg, Confirmation is ordinarily received in 8th grade.

16. What does it mean to be “in the state of grace?”

A. The word grace simply means “gift.” It is called this, because it is a gift from God. To be in the state of grace actually means to be in a particular kind of grace called *sanctifying grace*. Sanctifying grace is the grace that puts us into a right relationship with God and makes us holy in His sight. It is a sharing in His own divine life. Ordinarily one first receives sanctifying grace in the Sacrament of Baptism. Ways that we can increase in sanctifying grace are through frequent reception of the sacraments (especially by regular Mass attendance, reception of Holy Communion, and through frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance), by keeping the commandments, by practicing the virtues, and through daily prayer. The only way for a baptized person not to be in sanctifying grace is to have mortal sin(s) on his/her soul. A person must be in the state of grace when he/she dies to go to heaven. To die in mortal sin, without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love, means remaining separated from Him forever by our free choice (cf. CCC 1033).

17. What is sin and what are the categories of sin a person can commit?

A. A sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission against God’s law. There are two categories of sin a person can commit - venial and mortal. While we need to be sorry for all of our sins, only mortal sins cause one to lose the gift of sanctifying grace (cf. CCC Glossary, *Sin*, 1854).

18. What makes a sin a mortal sin?

A. There are three things that make a sin a mortal sin:

1. It must be a serious sin (grave matter).
2. You must know it is a serious sin (sufficient knowledge).
3. You must freely choose to commit it anyway (full consent of

the will).

All three of these conditions must be present for a person to be guilty of mortal sin (CCC 1855-59).

19. Can one return to the state of grace if he/she has committed mortal sin(s)?

A. Absolutely, and God wants this very much because He loves us and wants us to be in heaven someday with Him forever! If one has committed mortal sin, he or she is restored to the state of sanctifying grace by being sorry for his/her sins (contrition) making a good confession of the sins to a priest and receiving absolution from him. When one does this, all of his/her sins are not only forgiven, the sins themselves are actually wiped out by God's infinite mercy (cf. CCC 1468, 1472, 1496).

20. What graces does one receive in Confirmation?

A. In Confirmation one receives the following graces (cf. CCC 1302 – 1305, 1316):

- a. An increase and deepening of baptismal graces
- b. It roots the confirmand more deeply in his/her relationship with God the Father.
- c. It deepens one's relationship with Christ.
- d. Strengthens one's bond with the Church
- e. It gives one a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.
- f. It confers an indelible character on the soul of the confirmand.

21. How is Confirmation related to Baptism?

A. Confirmation is related to Baptism in that it increases and deepens baptismal graces (cf. 1303-04).

22. What graces are received in Baptism?

A. Baptism confers the following graces on those who receive this sacrament (cf. CCC 1262-1274, 1279):

- a. They are washed clean of all sin, original as well as personal.
- b. They are made new creatures becoming adopted sons or daughters of God the Father, members of Christ and His Church, partakers in the divine nature, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

- c. They are given the gift of sanctifying grace, the grace of justification, making them heirs to heaven.
- d. God bestows on them the theological virtues of:
 - a. Faith – which enables one to believe in God and in all He reveals, because He can neither deceive nor be deceived.
 - b. Hope – which enables one to desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace needed to attain it.
 - c. Charity – which enables one to love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

23. How many times may one receive the Sacrament of Confirmation?

- A. A person can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation one time (CCC 1304).

24. What is an indelible spiritual character?

- A. It is an indelible spiritual mark which is the permanent effect of the Sacrament of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, by which a person is given a new permanent configuration to Christ and a specific standing in the Church; the reception of these sacraments is never repeated (CCC Glossary, *Character, Sacramental*)

25. What is the significance of choosing a saint's name or name of special religious significance for Confirmation?

- A. Those being confirmed are to take the name of a saint or of particular religious significance. Patron saints provide a model of charity and we are assured of their intercession. The Confirmation name can also express a Christian mystery or virtue. Confirmation names may not be foreign to Christian sentiment (cf. CCC 2156, Can. 855).

Note: Appendix 2 in the diocesan K – 8 Religion Curriculum is on the Saints and gives a brief profile of 111 holy men and women.

26. What is a martyr?

- A. The word martyr means “witness.” A martyr is a witness to the truth of the faith, in which the martyr endures even death to be faithful to Christ. Confirmation gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and

never to be ashamed of the Cross (CCC Glossary, *Martyr*; CCC 1303).

27. What are the qualifications for a confirmation sponsor and what is his/her role?

- A.** A Confirmation sponsor must be at least 16 years old and may not be a parent of the person being confirmed. The sponsor must be a Catholic who has already received the Sacraments of Initiation, who is in good standing with the Catholic Church, and who is leading a good Catholic life. It is desirable that the one who undertook the role of sponsor at Baptism also be the Confirmation sponsor. The role of a Confirmation sponsor is to help the person being confirmed to act as a good witness to Christ, to lead a truly Catholic life, and eventually to get to heaven. The sponsor does this primarily through prayer and good example. The sponsor should encourage the person he/she is sponsoring to go to Mass at least every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, to go to Confession frequently, to study and follow the teachings of the Catholic Church, to help the poor, and to spread and defend the faith in word and deed (cf. CCC 1311, Code of Canon Law #893).

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