



Sacraments 10/35: Essentials of the Rite of Confirmation

The essentials of the Rite include both the matter and the form. The matter used in the Sacrament of Confirmation is a baptized, yet unconfirmed person, and Sacred Chrism. The Sacred Chrism is olive oil mixed with perfume. It was blessed by the bishop of the diocese at the Chrism Mass, held each year during Holy Week in the Cathedral, with all of the priests of the diocese surrounding him. The perfume gives the oil a unique, wonderful, and memorable smell. The Chrism is also used to bless new altars at the dedication of a church and the hands of a priest at his ordination.

The form used for Confirmation has two parts: the Laying on of Hands and the Signing of the Forehead. The Laying on of Hands is an ancient tradition that always signals something being set apart for a holy purpose. The bishop extends his hands over all of those to be confirmed and prays the following prayer:

*All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters from sin
and gave them new life.*

*Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their helper and guide.*

*Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of right judgment and courage,
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.*

Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

Then each candidate comes forward to the bishop with their sponsor. The bishop, with Chrism on his thumb, makes the Sign of the Cross on the candidate's forehead while saying their Confirmation name and the words: "be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." They then exchange the sign of Peace. While the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop, he can delegate any priest to do it in his place. Again, we see this normally at the Easter Vigil, where the pastor receives new members of the Church.

Rules for Confirmation Sponsors. A Sponsor for a Confirmation Candidate must be themselves fully initiated in the Catholic Church. They need to have been Baptized, Confirmed, and participate regularly in the life of the Church and receive the Eucharist. To show proof of initiation, a Baptismal certificate needs to be provided by the sponsor's Baptismal parish. To show proof of regular participation, they need a Sponsor Certificate from the pastor of their current parish. If their pastor refuses because they do not regularly participate, there is nothing I can do. I also would not give a sponsor certificate to someone who is not regularly participating in the life of the Church. I will not give my word for something I know is a lie just to make someone feel better.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: The Tri-partite Theory of Confirmation