

## Confirmation Symbols

### Anointing with Oil

In Old Testament times anointing was important as it set a person apart. Certain people like priests, kings, and prophets were consecrated with oil. It was a sign of having received special strength from God. It was a sign of being specially chosen for a mission by God. The name Christ means 'the anointed one.'

Anointing with the oil of Chrism in the form of a cross on the young person's forehead reminds each of us that we are called to witness to our faith. When the young person is anointed with Chrism by the bishop, it is a sealing of their baptism, when they were given a share in Jesus' family and given a share in his mission to live and spread the Good News. The bishop says the words: "*Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit*" as he anoints the young person with the oil of Chrism on the forehead in the shape of a cross. A seal is a sign of identification and authenticity. Formally letters and documents were sealed with the imprint of a person's seal or imprint ring pressed into hot wax. During confirmation God seals candidates as his own. Confirmation is once-in-a-lifetime sacrament. It signifies that we belong totally to Christ and are in his service.

It is a sign that the person is marked specially to be a follower of Jesus. He is in fact commissioning the young person to go forth with the Holy Spirit and be Christ for others by the way you live your life. What you have done publically, you must continue to do publically. The oil used is a mixture of balsam (*perfume*) and olive oil (*plant oil*) called chrism. On Holy Thursday, generally, the bishop consecrates chrism at a special Chrism Mass. Chrism means anointed. Christ means 'the anointed one.' The bishop breathes on the oil when he is blessing it. Chrism signifies strength and the balm signifies the sweetness which virtue must give to our lives.

### **In Confirmation, the young people are anointed for these three roles in carrying out Christ's mission:**

1. Confirmed Christians are sons and daughters of God and should act accordingly.
2. Confirmed Christians are to pray for others and help others by using their gifts and talents.
3. Confirmed Christians are not afraid to speak God's word, and to be Good News people.

### Called by Name

Our names are very special. Everybody knows us by our name. God knows us by our name. People choose a new name for Confirmation. In Old Testament times God sometimes changed people's name when they took on a special work for him. God called Abraham and Sarah, and he changed their names. Jesus sometimes gave people new names: Simon became Peter; Levi became Matthew. A change of name signifies a change in status. The bishop uses the Confirmation name when anointing the individual being confirmed. It is a reminder to the young person that they belong to God and are committing to God.

When you were given your name at Baptism, it was as if God was saying; *'You are precious to me and I love you.'* Since Baptism, God's Holy Spirit dwells within you, helping you and guiding you as you pass through stormy times, comforting and protecting you, so that you are not overwhelmed by life...

It is comforting to hear those words every day: "I have called you by your name you are mine.....Joe. How differently it sounds when your name is mentioned first, "Joe, I have called you by name, you are mine."

### **Wind: Breath of the Spirit**

Wind is very powerful. It can drive sailing ships and turn turbines. Wind is refreshing. We can feel it when we go for a walk. Wind is gentle. The gentle breeze rustles through the grass and through the leaves in the trees. Wind is mysterious. We cannot see the wind or catch it or hold it. Like wind, the Holy Spirit is powerful. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can change our lives. The Holy Spirit refreshes us with the new life of God's love in our hearts. The Holy Spirit brings peace, calm and gentleness into our lives.

The ancient Hebrew word for spirit is *ruah*, which means breath. When we think about our breath, the breath that keeps us alive, we are reminded of God's Holy Spirit within each one of us. In the account of Creation in Genesis 2:7, we read: *'Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.'* In John 20: 21-22, the Risen Jesus appeared to his disciples in the locked room. He said to them, *'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'* When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, *'Receive the Holy Spirit.'* At Baptism, each of us was filled with that same Holy Breath, that same Holy Spirit. On Pentecost day the disciples were gathered in one room and the Holy Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire and wind. The Holy Spirit brings us life- the life of the children of God.

### **Fire**

On Pentecost day the disciples were gathered in one room and the Holy Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire. Fire burns and destroys. Fire warms us and we feel welcome as we gather round it. Fire can melt and mould strong metals. The Holy Spirit melts away sin and moulds us into the type of people God wants us to be. The Holy Spirit destroys evil. We say that the Holy Spirit enkindles the fire of God's love in our hearts. "Come. Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love."

### **Laying on of hands**

In Old Testament times the laying on of hands was a sign of blessing. It was a sign that the strength and love of God was being communicated through the person who was giving the blessing to the person being blessed. The laying on of hands was also a sign that the person was being specially chosen and set apart to do God's work. It was a sign of consecration.

### **Jesus**

In the Gospel we read of Jesus placing his hands on people as a sign of blessing or healing, e.g. he placed his hands on little children and blessed them; he touched the leper and healed him; he placed his hands on the eyes of the blind man and cured him.

## **Early Church**

The apostles used the laying on of hands as a sign of the coming of the Holy Spirit. A story from the Acts of the Apostles points to this: When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

## **Sacrament of Confirmation**

In Confirmation the bishop lays his hands over those he is confirming. This is a sign of the Gift of the Holy Spirit about to be given to them. It is a sign that God is blessing them with the Gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign that God is choosing them and consecrating them for a special mission.

### **The prayer in the Confirmation Ceremony is...**

“All-powerful God, 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 judgement and courage,  
the spirit of knowledge and reverence.

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

We ask this through Christ our Lord.” Amen.