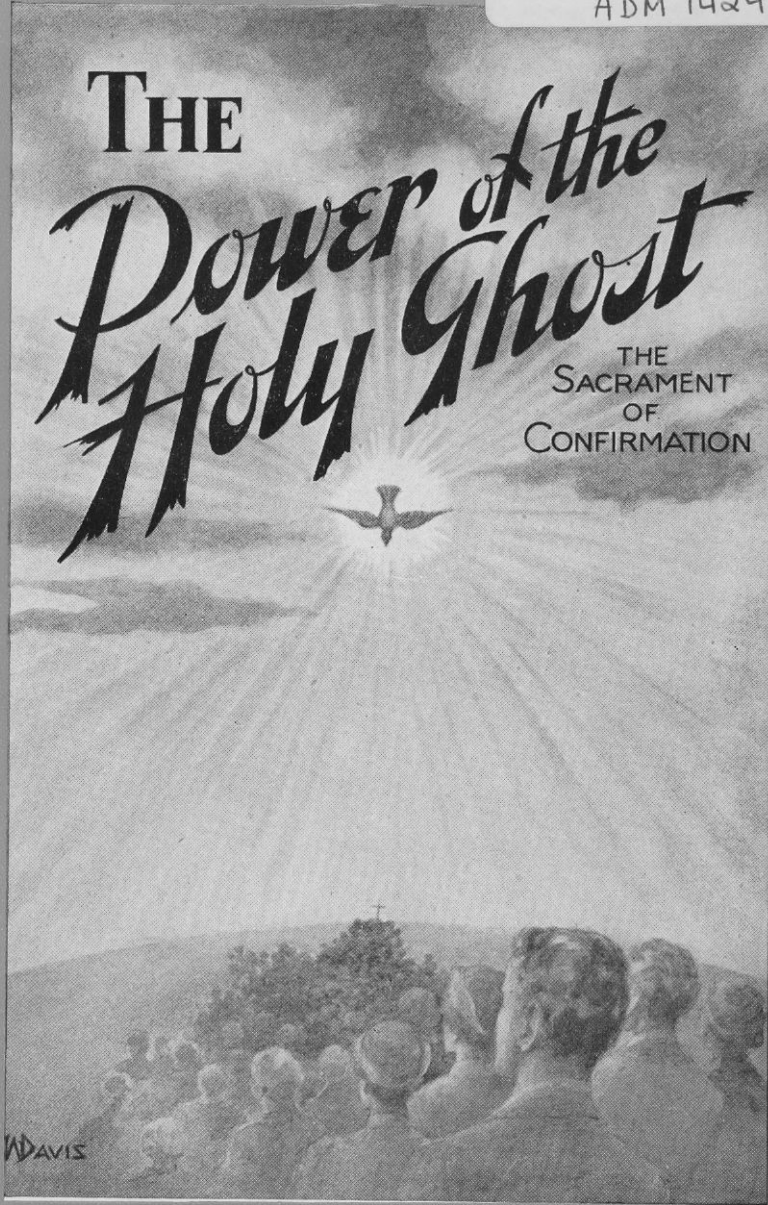


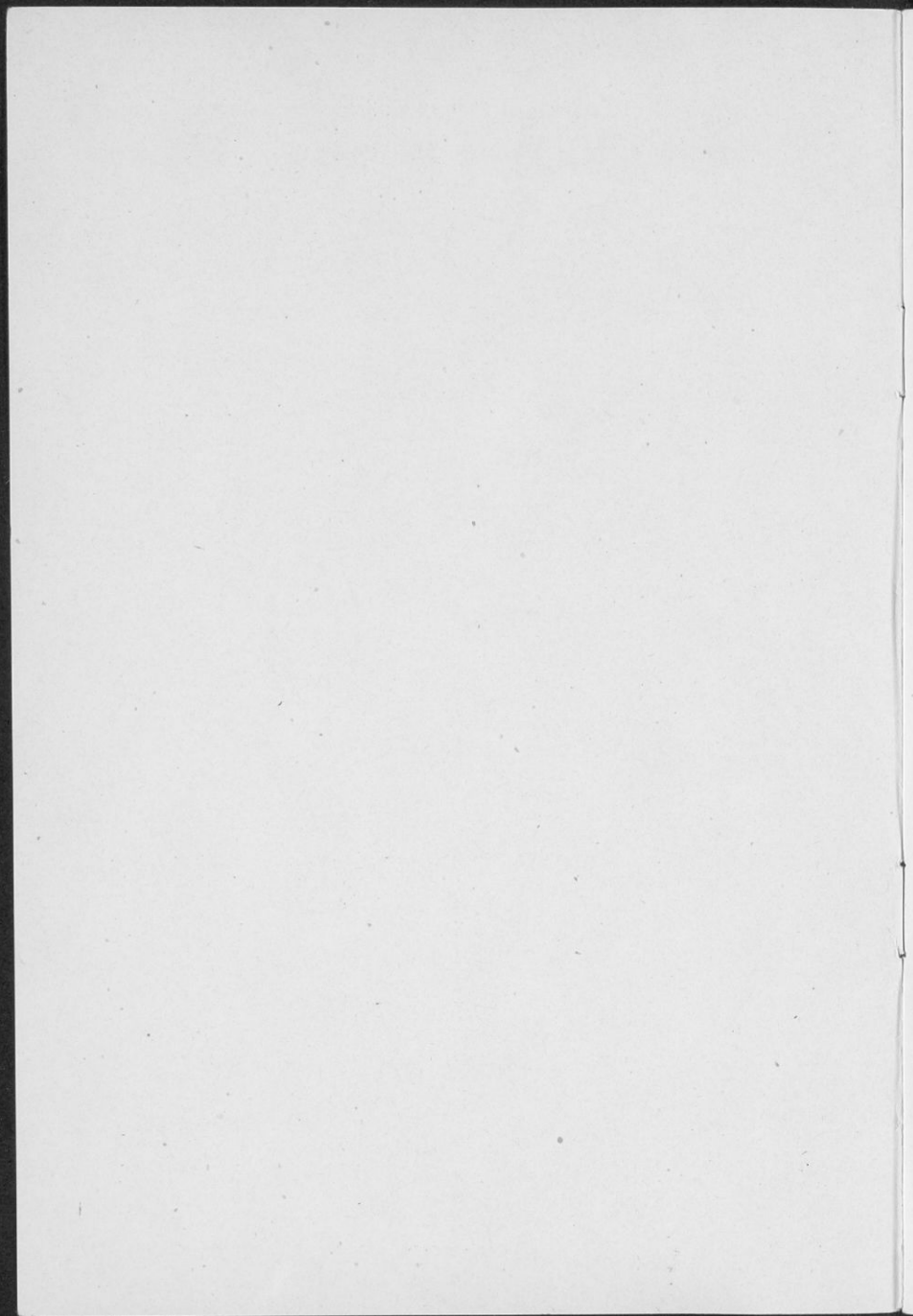
Connell, Francis J.
- The power of...
ADM 1424

THE Power of the Holy Ghost

THE
SACRAMENT
OF
CONFIRMATION



DAVIS



THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

The Sacrament of Confirmation

By the REV. FRANCIS J. CONNELL, C.S.S.R., S.T.D.



NEW YORK
THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET

Imprimi Potest:

WILLIAM T. McCARTY, C.S.S.R.,
Provincial Superior.

Brooklyn, N. Y., October 2, 1939.

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, October 31, 1939.

COPYRIGHT, 1939, BY
THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Deacidified



I. THE SACRAMENT OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

THROUGH Baptism the soul is born to the supernatural life. By the worthy reception of this sacrament a person is enriched with a spiritual quality, called sanctifying grace, by which the soul acquires a vitality far superior to its natural existence and similar to the life of God Himself. Like man's bodily life, this new, divine life is intended to function and to thrive, and to arrive at a degree of perfection corresponding to adult age in the process of natural development. Our divine Saviour regarded this stage of spiritual maturity as so important for the members of His Church that He instituted one of His seven sacraments for the express purpose of conferring it on souls that had been born to the supernatural life and incorporated into the Church by Baptism. In the early Christian centuries this sacrament was usually called "the imposition of hands" but since the fifth century it has been commonly designated *Confirmation* — literally "Strengthening" — a name which aptly expresses the main purpose of this rite, to give supernatural power to the Christian soul.

The first explicit mention of Confirmation is found in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the book in the New Testament containing the history of the Church during the years immediately following Christ's ascension into heaven. In the eighth chapter of this inspired narrative we read that the Deacon Philip preached the truths of the Christian religion to the people of Samaria so convincingly and with the corroboration of such remarkable miracles that many were converted and received Baptism at his hands. Then, the account

continues, "when the Apostles who were in Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For He was not as yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 14-17).

The ceremony described in this passage contains all the requisite elements of a sacrament. For a sacrament is a visible sign and cause of grace, intended for permanent use in the Church. Now, the rite performed by the two Apostles upon the converts of Samaria was a visible sign of grace, for it consisted of prayers—evidently recited aloud—and the ceremony of the laying on of hands. This rite was certainly a cause of grace, since it conferred the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, to whom is attributed the sanctification of the souls of men. It was evidently intended to be a permanent rite in the Church, since the passage clearly indicates that it was not meant as a special privilege for the people of Samaria, but was looked on as an ordinary feature of the sanctification of all who had received Baptism. This is confirmed by a later passage of the *Acts of the Apostles* which relates that St. Paul performed the same ceremony for the imparting of the Holy Ghost to some converts at Ephesus: "Having heard these things they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them" (Acts xix. 5, 6).

It might be objected that one of the requirements of a Christian sacrament was not present in the ceremony just described. For it is a doctrine of the Catholic Faith that all the sacraments were instituted by Christ; but there is no indication in the passages quoted above that our Lord made the laying on of hands a sacrament. Nor do the Gospels state that He established such a rite as a permanent sign and cause of grace for the use of His faithful. On one occasion, it is true, He laid His hands in blessing on little children (Mark x. 16), but He did not prescribe the continuance of this ceremony in the Church, as He did of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, it seems most probable that these little children were not baptized, and so were then incapable of receiving any sacrament save Baptism.

To this objection we reply that many things were done and said by Christ which are not recorded in the Scriptures (John xxi. 25), so that the mere absence of an express statement in the inspired books to the effect that He instituted Confirmation as a sacrament is no convincing argument that He did not do so. Furthermore, there are passages in the Gospel which imply His intention of providing a means whereby all the members of the Church could receive the Holy Ghost for the perfecting of their supernatural life. Thus, at the Last Supper He promised the Apostles that after His ascension He would send them the Holy Ghost, to remain with them and to help them in their needs. "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete (helper, comforter), that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth. . . .

The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things. . . . When the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me" (John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26). Now, these words, though spoken only to the Apostles, referred to the coming of the Holy Ghost on all Christ's followers, for St. John asserts in another part of his Gospel that *all* who believed in his Master were to receive the Holy Spirit: "This He said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him" (John vii. 39). In view of such a promise it is quite reasonable to conclude that the ceremony of the laying on of hands performed by the Apostles was done at the command of their Master. Perhaps at the Last Supper, when He spoke of the coming of the Holy Ghost, He explained to the Apostles the sacrament through which the Holy Ghost was to come into the souls of the faithful. Or, perhaps He did so in the course of the forty days between His resurrection from the dead and His ascension, when He frequently discoursed to the chosen disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts i. 3). At any rate, the declaration of the Church, the infallible exponent of divine revelation, is a sufficient guarantee to Catholics that Christ Himself established the rite through which the Christians of Samaria received the Holy Ghost, and which has been administered in the Church down through the centuries to the present day as the sacrament of Confirmation.

The tradition of the Church furnishes many proofs that Confirmation was always regarded as a source

of grace and a channel of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thus, Tertullian (160-240) says that after Baptism "the hand is imposed on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit" (*De Baptismo*, 4). Pope Siricius, writing about the year 390, prescribes that those baptized in heretical sects, on being admitted to the Catholic Church shall receive "the invocation of the sevenfold Spirit by the imposition of the bishop's hand" (Denzinger's *Enchiridion*, n. 88). Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604), referring to the powers of bishops, asserts: "Through us the faithful come to holy baptism, are blessed by our prayers, and by the imposition of our hands receive the Holy Ghost from God" (Homily XVII n. 18). These are but a few of the many quotations that could be given.

Besides the Catholic Church, the churches of the East which have renounced their allegiance to the Pope administer Confirmation. However, most of the Protestant churches, following the teachings of their founders in the sixteenth century, do not regard Confirmation as a sacrament. But those members of the Anglican and Episcopalian churches who constitute the High Church group, or Anglo-Catholic party, agree with Catholics in acknowledging seven sacraments, among which they include Confirmation. In this connection it is well to note that the Catholic Church admits the validity of this sacrament as conferred in the Oriental churches, even those separated from Catholic unity, because the proper ritual of Holy Orders has been observed in these churches at all times, so that their bishops and priests possess the same sacred powers as the bishops and priests of the

Catholic Church. But the Church does not acknowledge as a sacrament the Confirmation given by the bishops of the Anglican and Episcopalian churches because the changes in the rite of ordination made by the Church of England in the sixteenth century deprived this rite of the power to confer the priesthood and the episcopate.

Before the coming of Christ there were certain rites in the Jewish religion which were established by God as visible signs of grace, and which accordingly are rightly called sacraments, although they did not possess the same efficacy toward the sanctification of men's souls as do the Christian sacraments. Some of these pre-Christian sacraments corresponded in a general way to certain of the sacraments instituted by Christ. Thus, circumcision was somewhat like Baptism, in that it remitted original sin; the consecration of the Jewish priests resembled Holy Orders. But there was no sacrament before the time of our Lord corresponding to Confirmation. According to St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa*, I-II, Q. 102, a.5; III, Q. 65, a.1), the reason is that under the Old Law the time of the fullness of grace had not yet arrived, and the Holy Ghost had not yet descended to sanctify the Church, and so there was no place for a rite whose chief object is to confer the plenitude of grace and to bestow the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Confirmation is then an essentially Christian sacrament, specially adapted to the era in the world's history when the graces merited by Christ are poured out in lavish abundance on the souls for whom He shed His precious Blood. Surely it is an inestimable privilege to have been born under the New Law and thus to have

the opportunity of receiving the wondrous sacrament whereby those born to the supernatural life by Baptism are brought to spiritual maturity by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Questions

1. Why is it fitting that there should be a sacrament to give spiritual maturity?
2. What names have been given this sacrament?
3. Narrate the first scriptural account of Confirmation.
4. How are the requirements of a sacrament fulfilled in the ceremony just described?
5. What objection might be raised to prove that the rite in question was not a sacrament?
6. What proofs have we that our Lord instituted Confirmation? When did He do so?
7. Give some arguments from tradition to show that Confirmation was administered as a sacrament in the early centuries.
8. In what churches beside the Catholic Church is Confirmation administered as a sacrament?
9. What is the attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Confirmation of the non-Catholic Oriental churches and the Anglican Church?
10. What rites of the Jewish religion corresponded to some of the Christian sacraments? Why was there no rite corresponding to Confirmation?

II. THE LITURGY OF CONFIRMATION

The conferring of Confirmation is a most impressive rite. The ordinary minister of this sacrament is a bishop. This is most appropriate, for since Confirmation gives the fullness of grace its administration is fittingly reserved—at least under ordinary circumstances—to one possessing the fullness of the priestly power. Sacred Scripture relates that it was the Apostles, the first bishops, who imposed hands for the giving of the Holy Ghost; and in the writings of the second and third centuries the ministry of Confirmation is always attributed to a bishop. Nowadays, each diocesan bishop usually confirms the faithful within the boundaries of his own diocese, but he can delegate another bishop to do so. In a large diocese there is sometimes an auxiliary bishop to share this task with the diocesan bishop. Outside his own diocese a bishop may confirm privately his own people, and also persons from another diocese if he obtains or reasonably presumes the permission of the bishop of the place.

However, from a practice prevailing for many centuries, especially in the East, we know that a priest can be deputed by the Pope to give Confirmation. Such a priest is said to be the extraordinary minister of the sacrament. In most Oriental rites it is the custom for the priest who baptizes to confirm immediately afterward, and the popes allow this to go on, empowering even the priests of the non-Catholic Eastern churches—such as the Greek Orthodox Church—to give this sacrament validly, so that the members of these denominations, though separated from the Catho-

lic Church, may not be deprived of the sacrament of the Holy Ghost. In the Latin Church the power to confirm is sometimes given to priests in mission countries, where it would be difficult for the bishops to visit all sections of their dioceses regularly. Furthermore, those of the cardinals who are priests but not bishops, and also priests that are abbots or prefects apostolic are delegated by the general law of the Church, which is sanctioned by the Pope, to administer Confirmation.

When about to confer this sacrament the bishop, vested in cope and mitre, stands on the platform of the altar, facing those to be confirmed. He begins the ceremony by extending both hands over the candidates and praying that they may receive the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost. Then he is seated (or, if there are many to be confirmed, he may pass along the communion-rail) and those to be confirmed kneel in turn before him. He dips his thumb in chrism, and placing the rest of his hand on the head of each traces with his thumb on the forehead the Sign of the Cross, saying: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then the bishop strikes the recipient lightly on the cheek, with the words: "Peace be with thee." Some scholars believe that this ceremony is a modification of the kiss of peace, which was frequently employed in the ecclesiastical functions of the early Church, and the words accompanying the blow afford an argument for this theory. Others believe that it is derived from the medieval ceremony of the accolade whereby a king raised one of his subjects to the rank

of knighthood by striking him lightly with a sword. The latter explanation harmonizes well with the purpose of Confirmation to make the recipient a valiant soldier in the service of Christ. After these ceremonies have been performed on all, the bishop recites some prayers, gives his blessing, and then listens while the newly confirmed recite the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father and the Hail Mary. This last feature implies that after receiving Confirmation a Catholic is expected to proclaim and to defend the truths of his religion and to be faithful in its practice, and so he must show that he is acquainted with at least its fundamental doctrines and its chief prayers.

The chrism used in Confirmation is a mixture of olive oil and balsam, which is blessed by the bishop at the Solemn Mass of Holy Thursday. Even when a priest is empowered to confirm he cannot himself bless the chrism, but must obtain some blessed by a bishop. The Church commands that the chrism be new—that is, blessed on the Holy Thursday immediately preceding its use. Only for a very grave reason may a bishop use chrism from a previous year. The rich olive oil symbolizes the abundance of the graces poured into the souls of those confirmed; while in the fragrant balsam we find a reminder of the sweet odor of virtue which should permeate the life of a perfect Christian, and also a symbol of preservation from sin effected by Confirmation, since balsam is used to prevent corruption.

The laying on of the bishop's hand signifies that power from on high is given through this sacrament; for both in the Old and in the New Testament the im-

position of hands has been recognized as a sign of the conferring of divine strength and grace. The anointing is made in the form of a cross, because this is pre-eminently the sign of Christ, to whose service the one confirmed is dedicated. This sign is put on the forehead, the most prominent part of the human countenance, to indicate that after receiving Confirmation a Catholic must not be ashamed to profess his loyalty to Christ openly before the whole world.

Not all the ceremonies we have described are necessary for the valid administration of Confirmation. Some of them, such as the blow on the cheek, have been added to the essential elements by the Church to enrich the dignity of this sacrament, like the accessory ceremonies of solemn Baptism. Nowadays it is commonly held by theologians that the entire essence of the sacrament of Confirmation is found in the anointing with chrism accompanied by the imposition of the bishop's hand together with the words: "I sign thee, etc." In theological language the chrism is called the *remote matter* of the sacrament, the anointing with the imposition the *proximate matter*, and the words of the bishop the *form*.

As in Baptism, so in Confirmation the recipient is addressed in his Christian name by the bishop just before he pronounces the form. However, one may have his baptismal name or names repeated, without taking a new name. So, too, in Confirmation as in Baptism one has a sponsor, or godparent; but ordinarily the same person should not act as sponsor for both sacraments. The sponsor should be of the same sex as the one confirmed; and it is the wish of the

Church that each recipient have his or her own sponsor. However, for grave reasons one man and one woman can act as sponsors for an entire group, the former for the boys, the latter for the girls.

A sponsor contracts a spiritual relationship with those for whom he or she acts as godparent, so that if the parents are unable or neglect to care for the religious training of these children, the sponsor has an obligation of doing so, as far as circumstances permit. To be a sponsor at Confirmation a person must have been himself confirmed and be free from at least the more serious ecclesiastical penalties which bring with them public infamy. As is evident, only a practical Catholic should be chosen for this office. The father, mother, husband or wife of the one being confirmed cannot serve as sponsor. While the sacrament is being actually administered the godparent touches the person whose sponsor he is, usually by laying his hand on the recipient's shoulder.

Confirmation, being in a special manner the sacrament of the Holy Ghost, is most appropriately conferred on the Feast of Pentecost or within its octave; however, it may be given on any day in the year. Nor must it necessarily be administered in a church; for a good reason a bishop may confirm in a private house or other decent place.

As was said above, the anointing with chrism is nowadays regarded as a necessary element of Confirmation. However, this presents a difficulty when we study the rite for the giving of the Holy Ghost as described in Sacred Scripture and in the writings of the early Fathers, for in these accounts there is no

mention of the use of chrism, only prayer and the imposition of hands being designated as the constituent factors. How, then, can it be claimed that this ancient rite was really the same as our sacrament of Confirmation?

To this difficulty some Catholic scholars reply that chrism was actually used in those early days, even though there is no mention of it in the ancient documents. However, a better explanation seems to be that when Christ established Confirmation He did not specify in detail the ceremony by which it was to be conferred, but gave permission to the Apostles to choose whatever external rite they might deem suitable to symbolize the conferring of the Holy Ghost, and also extended the permission to the successors of the Apostles in the government of the Church to change this rite when they thought it should be done. By virtue of this commission the Apostles and the early bishops used only the imposition of hands and prayer; later the bishops, with the authorization of the Pope, adopted the use of chrism. It must be noted also that even today, at least in the Latin rite, the anointing with chrism does not constitute the entire proximate matter of Confirmation, since the laying on of the bishop's hand is also an essential factor. And so we can say that the anointing has been added to the ceremony used in the early Church rather than substituted for it.

A few points of difference between the ceremony of Confirmation as it is administered in the Latin rite and the ceremony in use among the Christians of the Orient are deserving of mention. In the Eastern rites

the chrism is composed not only of olive oil and balsam but also of many other unguents—sometimes as many as fifty. However, the olive oil always predominates. The anointing is administered not only on the forehead but also on the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the ears, the chest, the hands and the feet. The form used by the minister in giving the anointings is: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost”—the words “is given thee” being understood. The bishop does not extend his hands over those to be confirmed, as is done in the Latin rite, and the application of the chrism is regarded as an anointing only, the idea of the imposition of the bishop’s hand as an essential factor not being emphasized by the Oriental theologians.

Questions

1. Who is the ordinary minister of Confirmation? How is this proved? When does a bishop lawfully confirm?
2. Who can be the extraordinary minister of Confirmation? What priests have this power?
3. Describe the rite of Confirmation.
4. What is to be noted about chrism, its meaning and its blessing?
5. What is symbolized by the imposition of the bishop’s hand? the anointing on the forehead in the sign of a cross? the blow on the cheek?

6. Which ceremonies essentially compose the sacrament of Confirmation? What are the elements of this sacrament called by theologians?
7. What are the Church's laws regarding a sponsor in Confirmation?
8. When and where may Confirmation be given?
9. How do we explain the apparent difference between the rite of Confirmation in the early Church and that in use today?
10. What are the main points of difference between the Latin and the Oriental rite in the administration of Confirmation?

III. THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

On the tenth day after our Lord's ascension into heaven the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles, as Christ had promised when He said: "I will send Him (the Paraclete) to you" (John xvi. 7). The incident is graphically related in the *Acts of the Apostles* (II, 2-4). First, a great sound was heard as of a mighty wind, and then the Holy Spirit descended from on high and rested on the head of each disciple in the form of a tongue of fire. The effect on the Apostles was instantaneous and astounding. Up to then they had been slow to comprehend the significance and the sublimity of Christ's teachings; now they became inspired preachers of the most profound truths of divine revelation. Previously they had been timid and vacillating; now they suddenly became stanch and fearless; indifferent to hardships and persecutions in their zeal to proclaim the Gospel. And so, with their minds illumined with heavenly wisdom and their hearts animated with supernatural courage, they went forth to spread the kingdom of Christ throughout the entire world, and persevered unwaveringly until they gave the final proof of their love and loyalty by accepting the death of martyrdom.

The descent of the Holy Ghost that first Pentecost Sunday was the fulfillment to the Apostles of Christ's promise to send the Holy Ghost on all His faithful followers. And it was our Lord's intention that the other members of His Church should receive the Holy Ghost through the sacrament of Confirmation. Accordingly, we receive in Confirmation the same effects

that the Apostles received when the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the form of fiery tongues. Of course, this does not mean that the sacrament of Confirmation is intended to bestow the miraculous favors imparted to the Apostles, such as the gift of tongues enabling them to preach to people of every nation. These gifts were intended only for the first preachers of the Faith, so that they might more easily and more rapidly propagate the truths of Christianity. Accordingly, they are not to be regarded as normal effects of Confirmation. But the sanctifying influence of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the souls of the first disciples, and the spiritual benefits consequent on His coming—these effects are repeated whenever a person worthily receives Confirmation.

Theologians distinguish two effects of Confirmation—a character and grace. The character is a spiritual quality derived from the priesthood of Christ. Like the character of Baptism, which it perfects, it will remain on the soul for all eternity. Inasmuch as it is a participation of the priestly power of our divine Saviour, the character deposes the recipient to a certain measure of priestly activity—that is, to proclaim and to defend the faith, or in other words, to be in a limited degree an apostle and a preacher.

The grace conferred by Confirmation is twofold—sanctifying and sacramental. The former is that sublime quality which is a participation of the nature of God and gives supernatural life to the soul. The latter is the special adaptation of the sanctifying grace given by this sacrament to the needs of one who has reached maturity in the supernatural life. It consists

chiefly of light for the intellect and strength for the will. Just as in the natural growth to maturity a person acquires more knowledge and greater vigor than he had in childhood, so the Catholic who comes to spiritual maturity through Confirmation receives a deeper understanding of divine truths and a more determined will to serve God than he had before. As we saw above, these same two effects—supernatural light and strength—were the special graces communicated to the Apostles by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

However, it must be remembered that certain conditions must be fulfilled by the recipient of Confirmation in order to obtain its effects. In the first place, he must be baptized. Just as one must first be born before he can come to adult stature, so one must first receive the sacrament of spiritual birth before he can receive the sacrament of spiritual maturity. In the case of an infant or a person who has not come to the use of reason nothing more than previous baptism is necessary for the reception of Confirmation and of its graces. But one who has attained to the use of reason must have the intention of receiving this sacrament; for God does not confer holiness on one possessing the power of free choice without his own consent. An implicit or general intention suffices. Thus, a child who had reached the age of reason but had not yet been confirmed might be dying unconscious; yet Confirmation could be administered on the principle that the child has the general purpose of receiving all the sacraments that a good Catholic is supposed to receive.

However, a person might be confirmed with the requisite intention of receiving the sacrament, but

with unrepented mortal sin on his soul. Such a one is said to receive the sacrament *validly* but *unfruitfully*. Confirmation impresses its character on his soul but gives him no grace. For Confirmation is a sacrament of the living—that is, it is meant to impart its graces only on one who is already living the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. If a person consciously received this sacrament in mortal sin, he would be guilty of a heinous sacrilege and would add another grave sin to those already on his soul.¹ However, one who receives Confirmation validly but unfruitfully can subsequently obtain its graces if he repents of his sins and returns to the state of sanctifying grace. For, on account of the indelible character imprinted on his soul he cannot receive this sacrament again; and the merciful God does not wish any Catholic to be permanently deprived of the benefits of Confirmation, even though it was by his own fault that he failed to receive its graces when the sacrament was administered. Accordingly, we believe that Confirmation, even when received unworthily, can afterward *revive*.

Like the other sacraments, Confirmation bestows grace in a measure proportionate to the dispositions with which one receives it. Hence, it is the desire of the Church that those who are to be confirmed, if they have reached the age of reason, shall prepare most diligently for this great sacrament. The best imme-

¹ It is generally held by theologians that one who receives Confirmation in mortal sin but without realizing that he is doing wrong, and at the same time has attrition, or imperfect contrition, for all his mortal sins, acquires the state of grace through the efficacy of this sacrament, which in this case by exception possesses the justifying power of a sacrament of the dead. Such a case would occur only rarely, and one who would come to the state of grace through Confirmation would not thereby be dispensed from the obligation of confessing the sins thus remitted.

diate preparation is a good confession and a fervent holy Communion—that is, if one has already been admitted to the holy table.² The parents of children who are about to receive Confirmation should frequently speak to them of the important event that is soon to occur, and see to it that they faithfully attend the preparatory instructions.

As has been said, baptized infants—and by this we mean all who have not yet reached the age of reason—can receive Confirmation validly and fruitfully. Indeed, this is the usual practice in the Oriental churches, and even in the Latin Church an infant may be confirmed for a good reason, especially if it is in danger of death. Then, if the little one dies before reaching the age of reason, it will have a higher degree of heavenly glory than a child that was only baptized. On the other hand, if such a child survives, the grace of the sacrament will procure for him the special assistance of God when it is needed in his more mature years. However, ordinarily in the Latin Church children are not confirmed until they are at least seven years old, so that they may better appreciate the benefits of this sacrament.

As the sacrament of the Holy Ghost, Confirmation bestows the seven gifts attributed to the third Person of the Blessed Trinity — wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. It must not be thought that these gifts are conferred only through Confirmation. They always accompany sanctifying grace; and so, even at Baptism

² Generally speaking, the Church prefers that children receive Confirmation before their First Communion. But often circumstances make the reversal of this order necessary.

a person receives them. But we emphasize their bestowal through Confirmation because this sacrament in a special way inspires the Christian to employ the gifts of the Holy Ghost. As was said, the proper sacramental effect of Confirmation is supernatural light and strength—the former in the intellect, the latter in the will. Now, it is in these two faculties that the gifts reside and operate—wisdom, understanding, knowledge and counsel in the intellect, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord in the will. And so, it is through the operation of the gifts that one receives the supernatural light and strength which the Almighty wishes to characterize the mature Christian. Through wisdom one knows God and sees His lovableness; through understanding one perceives the significance of the truths of faith; through knowledge one recognizes the relation of created things to eternity; through counsel one judges rightly what course of action should be followed in particular cases. Through fortitude one is enabled to suffer patiently the trials of life and to undertake great things in the service of God; through piety one is inspired to reverence God and those who represent Him on earth; through fear of the Lord one is moved to avoid sin as the greatest of evils.

Confirmation does not effect a merely transient infusion of these gifts into the soul. As long as one retains the state of grace after Confirmation, he keeps these precious outpourings of the love of the Holy Spirit. And with each meritorious action of his life, with each worthy reception of a sacrament, these gifts are intensified in proportion to the increase of his

sanctifying grace. It is indeed most consoling to realize that by virtue of the Confirmation which we received in childhood we shall be enabled to persevere to the end of our days as perfect Christians, as apostles of Jesus Christ, enriched by the light and the strength which the Holy Ghost is ever infusing into our minds and hearts.

Questions

1. Describe the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles as narrated in the *Acts of the Apostles*.
2. What is the connection between this event and the sacrament of Confirmation?
3. Explain the character conferred by Confirmation.
4. Explain the graces given by Confirmation.
5. What conditions must be fulfilled for the valid reception of Confirmation?
6. What are the requirements for the fruitful reception of Confirmation?
7. How should one prepare for Confirmation?
8. What are the laws and customs in the Church regarding the age for Confirmation?
9. How does Confirmation specially impart the gifts of the Holy Ghost? Explain these gifts.
10. What is to be noted about the permanence and the growth of the gifts in one confirmed?

IV. CONFIRMATION AND CATHOLIC ACTION

Catholic Action is an essential element of the Catholic Church, because the Church is a living organization, and life always produces action. The recent popes, especially Pope Pius XI, have urgently exhorted the members of the Church to Catholic Action. One of the most effective means toward the promotion of Catholic Action is the sacrament of Confirmation. Indeed, it is sometimes called "the sacrament of Catholic Action."

Catholic Action can be defined as the active cooperation of the laity with the hierarchy—that is, the Pope and the bishops—toward the accomplishment of the Church's mission, the salvation of mankind. The doctrinal basis of Catholic Action is the very sublime and fundamental truth of Christian revelation known as the doctrine of the Mystical Body. According to this doctrine all the members of the Church constitute under the headship of Christ an organization so compact and so united that it can be appropriately compared to the living human body which, though composed of many tiny cells is one co-ordinated whole. And just as the head of a living body transmits to the various members and organs the vital influx they need to retain their life and their power to function, so Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, communicates to the faithful the supernatural forces which they need to persevere in the life of grace and to perform spiritual activities. Now, even the smallest part of the human body has some task to perform for the benefit of the whole; and so, too, every member of the Mys-

tical Body, however humble and obscure he may be, is expected to participate in some form of work conducive to the welfare of the Church. Those who have a divine commission to guide and rule others—the Pope and the bishops—collaborate more intimately and more extensively with Christ in fostering the supernatural life of the Church; yet even the laity are expected to participate in this work in a manner and measure proportionate to their particular abilities and opportunities. And when lay members of the Church take an active part in a work directed to the strengthening and the spread of their religion—always, of course, under the direction and the guidance of the Pope and the bishops³—they are participating in Catholic Action. All this is a consequence of the doctrine propounded so frequently and so emphatically by St. Paul, especially when he said: “We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another; and having different gifts according to the grace that is given to us” (Romans xii. 5, 6).

From this brief development of the doctrine of the Mystical Body we can see how false is the attitude of those Catholics who believe that they are adequately fulfilling their glorious vocation as members of the one true Church if they are satisfied to lead lives of personal holiness, without, however, making any effort to help the work of the Church in a positive and active manner. Such an attitude makes the Catholic life a mere matter of receiving benefits without

³ This point is most important, for if a Catholic labors in behalf of his religion on his own initiative, his work, however good and meritorious it may be, cannot be called Catholic Action. For Catholic Action is an *official* participation in the Church's activities, and therefore essentially postulates the authorization of the hierarchy.

giving anything in return. Surely, this is not the mind of Christ, who urged all His followers without exception: "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. . . . He that shall *do* and *teach*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew v. 16-19).

Now, what direct bearing has Confirmation on Catholic Action? As was said before, the first effect of this sacrament is to impress on the soul a character, which is a participation in the priesthood of Christ. The character of Baptism is also a participation in our Lord's priesthood, but its chief purpose is to depute one to the sacred function of receiving the other sacraments. The character of Confirmation destines the recipient to a more active share in the ministry—a share analogous to that possessed by those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. This is the task of explaining and defending the Catholic religion. This same task was assigned to the Apostles by Christ just before His ascension, and He promised to send the Holy Ghost to aid them in its fulfillment: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, coming upon you, and you shall be *witnesses* unto Me" (Acts i. 8). And since Confirmation is intended to extend to all Catholics the effects of the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, even the lay member of the Church who has been confirmed is deputed to be a witness to Christ, to share in the priestly ministry of preaching and upholding His doctrines.

Similarly, the special graces of Confirmation fit the

recipient for Catholic Action. For, to proclaim and to defend Catholicism in a world that is blind to divine truth and hostile to the things of the spirit one needs particularly supernatural light and strength—and these are the chief graces of Confirmation, abundantly bestowed through the gifts of the Holy Ghost. With the aid of these gifts the lay person anxious to participate in Catholic Action will find himself marvelously enlightened and strengthened in the doubts and difficulties that will surely befall any one who strives to promote the cause of Christ in an unbelieving world. In him will be repeated in a measure the wondrous effects produced in the Apostles by the advent of the Holy Ghost, of which the Scripture says: "With great power did the Apostles give testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord; and great grace was in them all" (Acts iv. 33).

It might be asked, what type of work a lay person can undertake in order to participate in Catholic Action. To give a definite answer, many circumstances would have to be considered—the abilities of the particular individual, his place in civil and social life, the religious beliefs of those around him, the special needs of the time and place, etc. Of course the general principle is that the best type of Catholic Action is that which is actually suggested to the laity by their bishops. Thus, at the present day in America there is need of lay Catholics who will propose the teachings of their Church to non-Catholics, either by their writings or by public addresses or by personal contact. Naturally, only those are capable of this form of the lay apostolate who apply themselves to a diligent

study of their religion, and hence to take part in study clubs and discussion groups and especially the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine is an admirable form of Catholic Action. Active affiliation in the campaigns against vile literature and indecent plays, and zealous membership in religious organizations, such as the Holy Name Society and the Sodality of Our Lady and the Legion of Mary also afford a fruitful opportunity for Catholic Action.

It must be borne in mind that the first duty of one who wishes to take part in Catholic Action is to be a fervent Catholic himself. A bodily organ cannot function properly unless it is healthy—unless the nourishing blood-stream constantly flows through it, and it is united to the nerve centers in the head. Similarly, a member of the Mystical Body, the Church, cannot act effectively for the spiritual welfare of the Church unless his own spiritual life is constantly preserved and fostered by the sacraments, and he is ever docile to the inspirations of divine grace coming from Christ, the Head. It is possible for a person to accomplish great things externally for the Catholic cause, but unless he is animated by the life of grace and motivated by a supernatural purpose, his work cannot be classified as Catholic Action. For true Catholic Action is supernatural activity having the glory of God for its ultimate object, not merely natural activity in which one seeks his own gratification or the praise of men.

We have entitled this pamphlet *THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST*, for that is the expression Christ Himself applied to the effect of the coming of the Holy

Ghost on His Apostles (Acts i. 8), and it is the same Holy Spirit that Catholics receive in Confirmation to give them supernatural power in the form of light and strength. May all who read this pamphlet be inspired with a greater reverence for this sacrament. If they have already received Confirmation, let them remember that its character and graces are their life-long prerogatives. If, however, any adult who reads this little treatise has for some reason or other not yet been confirmed, it is my sincere wish and earnest prayer that he will not delay in fortifying himself with this sublime sacrament whereby the Holy Ghost descends into the soul of the Christian to enlighten and to strengthen him and to inspire him to activity in the service of Christ and of His Church.

Questions

1. What is Catholic Action?
2. Explain the doctrine on which Catholic Action is based.
3. What is to be said of those Catholics who merely receive benefits from the Church? What words of Christ are applicable in this connection?
4. Show how the character of Confirmation deutes one to Catholic Action.
5. How do the special graces of Confirmation prepare one for Catholic Action?

6. What particular works can constitute Catholic Action?
7. In what ways can you take part in Catholic Action in your locality?
8. What is the first duty of one who wishes to participate in Catholic Action?
9. How is this truth exemplified by analogy with the human body?
10. What should be the attitude of Catholics toward the sacrament of Confirmation?

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

FROM 1776 TO 1876

BY

W. W. HUNT

AND

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT

W. W. HUNT



