

## ARTICLE 1

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*),<sup>4</sup> and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word."<sup>5</sup>

## I. WHAT IS THIS SACRAMENT CALLED?

1214 This sacrament is called *Baptism*, after the central rite by which it is carried out: to baptize (Greek *baptizein*) means to "plunge" or "immerse"; the "plunge" into the water symbolizes  
628 the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as "a new creature."<sup>6</sup>

1215 This sacrament is also called "*the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit*," for it signifies and actually brings  
1257 about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one "can enter the kingdom of God."<sup>7</sup>

1216 "This bath is called *enlightenment*, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding . . ."<sup>8</sup> Having received in Baptism the Word, "the true light that enlightens every man," the person baptized has been "enlightened,"  
1243 he becomes a "son of light," indeed, he becomes "light" himself:<sup>9</sup>

Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift. . . . We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; *grace* since it is given even to the guilty; *Baptism* because sin is buried in the water; *anointing* for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; *enlightenment* because it radiates light; *clothing* since it veils our shame; *bath* because it washes; and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship.<sup>10</sup>

4 Cf. Council of Florence: DS 1314: *vitae spiritualis ianua*.

5 *Roman Catechism* II, 2, 5; cf. Council of Florence: DS 1314; CIC, cann. 204 § 1; 849; CCEO, can. 675 § 1.

6 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; cf. Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12.

7 Titus 3:5; Jn 3:5.

8 St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 61, 12: PG 6, 421.

9 Jn 1:9; 1 Thess 5:5; Heb 10:32; Eph 5:8.

10 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40, 3-4: PG 36, 361C.

## II. BAPTISM IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

### Prefigurations of Baptism in the Old Covenant

**1217** In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, during the *blessing of the baptismal water*, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of Baptism:

O God, who by invisible power  
accomplish a wondrous effect  
through sacramental signs  
and who in many ways have prepared water, your creation,  
to show forth the grace of Baptism;<sup>11</sup>

**1218** Since the beginning of the world, water, so humble and 344  
wonderful a creature, has been the source of life and fruitfulness. 694  
Sacred Scripture sees it as "overshadowed" by the Spirit of God:<sup>12</sup>

O God, whose Spirit  
in the first moments of the world's creation  
hovered over the waters,  
so that the very substance of water  
would even then take to itself the power to sanctify,<sup>13</sup>

**1219** The Church has seen in Noah's ark a prefiguring of salva- 701, 845  
tion by Baptism, for by it "a few, that is, eight persons, were saved  
through water".<sup>14</sup>

O God, who by the outpouring of the flood  
foreshadowed regeneration,  
so that from the mystery of one and the same element of water  
would come an end to vice and a beginning of virtue;<sup>15</sup>

**1220** If water springing up from the earth symbolizes life, the  
water of the sea is a symbol of death and so can represent the  
mystery of the cross. By this symbolism Baptism signifies commun- 1010  
ion with Christ's death.

**1221** But above all, the crossing of the Red Sea, literally the  
liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, announces the libera-  
tion wrought by Baptism:

O God, who caused the children of Abraham  
to pass dry-shod through the Red Sea,  
so that the chosen people, set free from slavery to Pharaoh,  
would prefigure the people of the baptized;<sup>16</sup>

**1222** Finally, Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan  
River by which the People of God received the gift of the land

11 *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 44: Blessing of Water.

12 Cf. *Gen* 1:2.

13 *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 44: Blessing of Water.

14 *1 Pet* 3:20.

15 *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 45: Blessing of Water.

16 *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 44: Blessing of Water: "*Abrahae filios per mare Rubrum sicco vestigio transire fecisti, ut plebs, a Pharaonis servitute liberata, populum baptizatorum praefiguraret.*"

promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Covenant.

### Christ's Baptism

**1223** All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. He begins his public life after having himself baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan.<sup>17</sup> After his resurrection Christ gives this mission to his apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the  
232 Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."<sup>18</sup>

536 **1224** Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to "fulfill all righteousness."<sup>19</sup> Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying.<sup>20</sup> The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his "beloved Son."<sup>21</sup>

**1225** In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to  
766 be baptized.<sup>22</sup> The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life.<sup>23</sup> From then on, it is possible "to be born of water and the Spirit"<sup>24</sup> in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.<sup>25</sup>

### Baptism in the Church

**1226** From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism. Indeed St. Peter declares to the crowd astounded by his preaching: "Repent, and be baptized every  
849 one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mt 3:13.

<sup>18</sup> Mt 28:19-20; cf. Mk 16:15-16.

<sup>19</sup> Mt 3:15.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Phil 2:7.

<sup>21</sup> Mt 3:16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Mk 10:38; cf. Lk 12:50.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6-8.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jn 3:5.

<sup>25</sup> St. Ambrose, *De sacr.* 2, 2, 6: PL 16, 444; cf. Jn 3:5.

sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>26</sup> The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, the God-fearing, pagans.<sup>27</sup> Always, Baptism is seen as connected with faith: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," St. Paul declared to his jailer in Philippi. And the narrative continues, the jailer "was baptized at once, with all his family."<sup>28</sup>

**1227** According to the Apostle Paul, the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ's death, is buried with him, 790 and rises with him:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.<sup>29</sup>

The baptized have "put on Christ."<sup>30</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies.<sup>31</sup>

**1228** Hence Baptism is a bath of water in which the "imperishable seed" of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect.<sup>32</sup> St. Augustine says of Baptism: "The word is brought to the material element, and it becomes a sacrament."<sup>33</sup>

### III. HOW IS THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

#### Christian Initiation

**1229** From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

**1230** This initiation has varied greatly through the centuries according to circumstances. In the first centuries of the Church, Christian initiation saw considerable development. A long period of *catechumenate* included a series of preparatory rites, which were liturgical landmarks along the path 1248

26 Acts 2:38.

27 Cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12-13; 10:48; 16:15.

28 Acts 16:31-33.

29 Rom 6:3-4; cf. Col 2:12.

30 Gal 3:27.

31 Cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13.

32 1 Pet 1:23; cf. Eph 5:26.

33 St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 80, 3: PL 35, 1840.

of catechumenal preparation and culminated in the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

- 1231** Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary  
 13 flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The *catechism* has its proper place here.

- 1232** The second Vatican Council restored for the Latin Church "the catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps."<sup>34</sup> The rites for these stages are to be found in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA).<sup>35</sup> The Council also gives permission that: "In mission countries, in addition to what is furnished by the Christian tradition, those elements  
 1204 of initiation rites may be admitted which are already in use among some peoples insofar as they can be adapted to the Christian ritual."<sup>36</sup>

**1233** Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup> In the Eastern rites the Christian initiation of infants also begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the Eucharist, while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian initiation.<sup>38</sup>

### The mystagogy of the celebration

**1234** The meaning and grace of the sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration. By following the gestures and words of this celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person.

- 617 **1235** The *sign of the cross*, on the threshold of the celebration, marks  
 2157 with the imprint of Christ the one who is going to belong to him and signifies the grace of the redemption Christ won for us by his cross.

- 1236** The proclamation of the Word of God enlightens the candidates and the assembly with the revealed truth and elicits the  
 1112 response of faith, which is inseparable from Baptism. Indeed Baptism is "the sacrament of faith" in a particular way, since it is the sacramental entry into the life of faith.

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34 SC 64.

35 Cf. RCIA (1972).

36 SC 65; cf. SC 37-40.

37 Cf. AG 14; CIC, cann. 851; 865; 866.

38 Cf. CIC, cann. 851, 2°; 868.

**1237** Since Baptism signifies liberation from sin and from its instigator the devil, one or more *exorcisms* are pronounced over the candidate. The celebrant then anoints him with the oil of catechumens, or lays his hands on him, and he explicitly renounces Satan. Thus prepared, he is able to *confess the faith of the Church*, to which he will be “entrusted” by Baptism.<sup>39</sup> 1673 189

**1238** The *baptismal water* is consecrated by a prayer of epiclesis (either at this moment or at the Easter Vigil). The Church asks God that through his Son the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water, so that those who will be baptized in it may be “born of water and the Spirit.”<sup>40</sup> 1217

**1239** The *essential rite* of the sacrament follows: *Baptism* properly speaking. It signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ. Baptism is performed in the most expressive way by triple immersion in the baptismal water. However, from ancient times it has also been able to be conferred by pouring the water three times over the candidate’s head. 1214

**1240** In the Latin Church this triple infusion is accompanied by the minister’s words: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” In the Eastern liturgies the catechumen turns toward the East and the priest says: “The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” At the invocation of each person of the Most Holy Trinity, the priest immerses the candidate in the water and raises him up again.

**1241** The *anointing with sacred chrism*, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one “anointed” by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.<sup>41</sup> 1294, 1574 783

**1242** In the liturgy of the Eastern Churches, the post-baptismal anointing is the sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation). In the Roman liturgy the post-baptismal anointing announces a second anointing with sacred chrism to be conferred later by the bishop—Confirmation, which will as it were “confirm” and complete the baptismal anointing. 1291

**1243** The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has “put on Christ,”<sup>42</sup> has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are “the light of the world.”<sup>43</sup> 1216

39 Cf. Rom 6:17.

40 Jn 3:5.

41 Cf. RBC 62.

42 Gal 3:27.

43 Mt 5:14; cf. Phil 2:15.

The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God  
 2769 entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father."

1244 *First Holy Communion.* Having become a child of God clothed with the wedding garment, the neophyte is admitted "to the marriage supper of the Lamb"<sup>44</sup> and receives the food of the new life, the body and blood of Christ. The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed,  
 1292 even little children, recalling the Lord's words: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them."<sup>45</sup> The Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptized child brought to the altar for the praying of the Our Father.

1245 The *solemn blessing* concludes the celebration of Baptism. At the Baptism of newborns the blessing of the mother occupies a special place.

#### IV. WHO CAN RECEIVE BAPTISM?

1246 "Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is able to be baptized."<sup>46</sup>

##### The Baptism of adults

1247 Since the beginning of the Church, adult Baptism is the common practice where the proclamation of the Gospel is still new. The catechumenate (preparation for Baptism) therefore occupies an important place. This initiation into Christian faith and life should dispose the catechumen to receive the gift of God in Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

1230 1248 The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumenate is to be "a formation in the whole Christian life . . . during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they

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44 Rev 19:9.

45 Mk 10:14.

46 CIC, can. 864; cf. CCEO, can. 679.

should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites."<sup>47</sup>

**1249** Catechumens "are already joined to the Church, they are already of the household of Christ, and are quite frequently already living a life of faith, hope, and charity."<sup>48</sup> "With love and solicitude mother Church already embraces them as her own."<sup>49</sup> 1259

### The Baptism of infants

**1250** Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called.<sup>50</sup> The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.<sup>51</sup> 403 1996

**1251** Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.<sup>52</sup>

**1252** The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.<sup>53</sup>

### Faith and Baptism

**1253** Baptism is the sacrament of faith.<sup>54</sup> But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. The catechumen or the godparent is asked: "What do you ask of God's Church?" The response is: "Faith!" 1123 168

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<sup>47</sup> AG 14; cf. RCIA 19; 98.

<sup>48</sup> AG 14 § 5.

<sup>49</sup> LG 14 § 3; cf. CIC, cann. 206; 788 § 3.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1514; cf. Col 1:12-14.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 867; CCEO, cann. 681; 686, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. LG 11; 41; GS 48; CIC, can. 868.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; CDF, instruction, *Pastoralis actio*: AAS 72 (1980) 1137-1156.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Mk 16:16.

1254 For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow *after* Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises. Preparation for Baptism  
2101 leads only to the threshold of new life. Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

1255 For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the *godfather* and *godmother*, who must be firm  
1311 believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized—child or adult—on the road of Christian life.<sup>55</sup> Their task is a truly ecclesial function (*officium*).<sup>56</sup> The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

## V. WHO CAN BAPTIZE?

1256 The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and  
1239-1240 priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon.<sup>57</sup> In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize,<sup>58</sup> by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does  
1752 when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation.<sup>59</sup>

## VI. THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

1129 1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation.<sup>60</sup> He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them.<sup>61</sup> Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and  
161, 846 who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.<sup>62</sup> The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are “reborn of water and the Spirit.” *God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.*

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55 Cf. CIC, cann. 872-874.

56 Cf. SC 67.

57 Cf. CIC, can. 861 § 1; CCEO, can. 677 § 1.

58 CIC, can. 861 § 2.

59 Cf. 1 Tim 2:4.

60 Cf. Jn 3:5.

61 Cf. Mt 28:19-20; cf. Council of Trent (1547) DS 1618; LG 14; AG 5.

62 Cf. Mk 16:16.

**1258** The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This *Baptism of blood*, like the *desire for Baptism*, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament. 2473

**1259** For *catechumens* who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament. 1249

**1260** "Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery."<sup>63</sup> Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have *desired Baptism explicitly* if they had known its necessity. 848

**1261** As regards *children who have died without Baptism*, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,"<sup>64</sup> allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism. 1257 1250

## VII. THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

**1262** The different effects of Baptism are signified by the perceptible elements of the sacramental rite. Immersion in water symbolizes not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal. Thus the two principal effects are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit.<sup>65</sup> 1234

### For the forgiveness of sins . . .

**1263** By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin.<sup>66</sup> In those who have 977 1425

63 GS 22 § 5. cf. LG 16; AG 7.

64 Mk 10:14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4.

65 Cf. Acts 2:38; Jn 3:5.

66 Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1316.

been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

1264 Yet certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls *concupiscence*, or metaphorically, "the tinder for sin" (*fomes peccati*); since *concupiscence* "is left for us to wrestle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, "an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."<sup>68</sup>

### "A new creature"

1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature,"<sup>69</sup> member of Christ and co-heir with him,<sup>70</sup> and a temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*:  
 1992 — enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;  
 1812 — giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;  
 1831 — allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.  
 1810 Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

### Incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ

1267 Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: "Therefore . . . we are members one of another."<sup>72</sup> Baptism incorporates us *into the Church*. From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."<sup>73</sup>

67 Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515.

68 2 Tim 2:5.

69 2 Cor 5:17; 2 Pet 1:4; cf. Gal 4:5-7.

70 Cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 12:27; Rom 8:17.

71 Cf. 1 Cor 6:19.

72 Eph 4:25.

73 1 Cor 12:13.

**1268** The baptized have become “living stones” to be “built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.”<sup>74</sup> By Baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. They are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that [they] may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light.”<sup>75</sup> *Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers.*

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**1269** Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us.<sup>76</sup> From now on, he is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to “obey and submit” to the Church’s leaders,<sup>77</sup> holding them in respect and affection.<sup>78</sup> Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.<sup>79</sup>

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**1270** “Reborn as sons of God, [the baptized] must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church” and participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.<sup>80</sup>

### The sacramental bond of the unity of Christians

**1271** Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: “For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, [they] are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.”<sup>81</sup> “Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn.”<sup>82</sup>

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74 1 Pet 2:5.

75 1 Pet 2:9.

76 Cf. 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 5:15.

77 Heb 13:17.

78 Cf. Eph 5:21; 1 Cor 16:15-16; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Jn 13:12-15.

79 Cf. LG 37; CIC, cann. 208-223; CCEO, can. 675:2.

80 LG 11; cf. LG 17; AG 7; 23.

81 UR 3.

82 UR 22 § 2.

### An indelible spiritual mark . . .

**1272** Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (*character*) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation.<sup>83</sup> Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.

**1273** Incorporated into the Church by Baptism, the faithful have received the sacramental character that consecrates them for Christian religious worship.<sup>84</sup> The baptismal seal enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the holy liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity.<sup>85</sup>

**1274** The Holy Spirit has marked us with the *seal of the Lord* ("*Dominicus character*") "for the day of redemption."<sup>86</sup> "Baptism indeed is the seal of eternal life."<sup>87</sup> The faithful Christian who has "kept the seal" until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his Baptism, will be able to depart this life "with the sign of faith,"<sup>88</sup> with his baptismal faith, in expectation of the blessed vision of God—the consummation of faith—and in the hope of resurrection.

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### IN BRIEF

- 1275** Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.
- 1276** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (*Mt* 28:19-20).
- 1277** Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.
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83 Cf. *Rom* 8:29; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609-1619.

84 Cf. *LG* 11.

85 Cf. *LG* 10.

86 St. Augustine, *Ep.* 98, 5: PL 33, 362; *Eph* 4:30; cf. 1:13-14; 2 *Cor* 1:21-22.

87 St. Irenaeus, *Dem ap.* 3: SCh 62, 32.

88 *Roman Missal*, EP I (Roman Canon) 95.

- 1278 The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- 1279 The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.
- 1280 Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character Baptism cannot be repeated (cf. DS 1609 and DS 1624).
- 1281 Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized (cf. *LG* 16).
- 1282 Since the earliest times, Baptism has been administered to children, for it is a grace and a gift of God that does not presuppose any human merit; children are baptized in the faith of the Church. Entry into Christian life gives access to true freedom.
- 1283 With respect to children who have died without Baptism, the liturgy of the Church invites us to trust in God's mercy and to pray for their salvation.
- 1284 In case of necessity, any person can baptize provided that he have the intention of doing that which the Church does and provided that he pours water on the candidate's head while saying: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
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## ARTICLE 2

### THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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- 1285 Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the "sacraments of Christian initiation," whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the

completion of baptismal grace.<sup>89</sup> For “by the sacrament of Confirmation, [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.”<sup>90</sup>

## I. CONFIRMATION IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

1286 In the Old Testament the prophets announced that the Spirit of the Lord would rest on the hoped-for Messiah for his saving mission.<sup>91</sup> The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism by John was the sign that this was he who was to come, the Messiah, the Son of God.<sup>92</sup> He was conceived of the Holy Spirit; his whole life and his whole mission are carried out in total communion with the Holy Spirit whom the Father gives him “without measure.”<sup>93</sup>

1287 This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah’s, but was to be communicated to *the whole messianic people*.<sup>94</sup> On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit,<sup>95</sup> a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost.<sup>96</sup> Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim “the mighty works of God,” and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age.<sup>97</sup> Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.<sup>98</sup>

1288 “From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ’s will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. For this reason 699 in the *Letter to the Hebrews* the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church.”<sup>99</sup>

89 Cf. *Roman Ritual*, Rite of Confirmation (OC), Introduction 1.

90 LG 11; cf. OC, Introduction 2.

91 Cf. *Isa* 11:2; 61:1; *Lk* 4:16-22.

92 Cf. *Mt* 3:13-17; *Jn* 1:33-34.

93 *Jn* 3:34.

94 Cf. *Ezek* 36:25-27; *Joel* 3:1-2.

95 Cf. *Lk* 12:12; *Jn* 3:5-8; 7:37-39; 16:7-15; *Acts* 1:8.

96 Cf. *Jn* 20:22; *Acts* 2:1-4.

97 *Acts* 2:11; cf. 2:17-18.

98 Cf. *Acts* 2:38.

99 Paul VI, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 659; cf. *Acts* 8:15-17; 19:5-6; *Heb* 6:2.

**1289** Very early, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, an anointing with perfumed oil (*chrism*) was added to the laying on of hands. This anointing highlights the name "Christian," which means "anointed" and derives from that of Christ himself whom God "anointed with the Holy Spirit."<sup>100</sup> This rite of anointing has continued ever since, in both East and West. For this reason the Eastern Churches call this sacrament *Chrismation*, anointing with *chrism*, or *myron* which means "chrism." In the West, the term *Confirmation* suggests that this sacrament both confirms baptism and strengthens baptismal grace.

### Two traditions: East and West

**1290** In the first centuries Confirmation generally comprised one single celebration with Baptism, forming with it a "double sacrament," according to the expression of St. Cyprian. Among other reasons, the multiplication of infant baptisms all through the year, the increase of rural parishes, and the growth of dioceses often prevented the bishop from being present at all baptismal celebrations. In the West the desire to reserve the completion of Baptism to the bishop caused the temporal separation of the two sacraments. The East has kept them united, so that Confirmation is conferred by the priest who baptizes. But he can do so only with the "myron" consecrated by a bishop.<sup>101</sup>

**1291** A custom of the Roman Church facilitated the development of the Western practice: a double anointing with sacred chrism after Baptism. The first anointing of the neophyte on coming out of the baptismal bath was performed by the priest; it was completed by a second anointing on the forehead of the newly baptized by the bishop.<sup>102</sup> The first anointing with sacred chrism, by the priest, has remained attached to the baptismal rite; it signifies the participation of the one baptized in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ. If Baptism is conferred on an adult, there is only one post-baptismal anointing, that of Confirmation.

**1292** The practice of the Eastern Churches gives greater emphasis to the unity of Christian initiation. That of the Latin Church more clearly expresses the communion of the new Christian with the bishop as guarantor and servant of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of his Church, and hence the connection with the apostolic origins of Christ's Church.

## II. THE SIGNS AND THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

**1293** In treating the rite of Confirmation, it is fitting to consider the sign of *anointing* and what it signifies and imprints: a spiritual *seal*.

<sup>100</sup> Acts 10:38.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. CCEO, can. 695 § 1; 696 § 1.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. St. Hippolytus, *Trad. Ap.* 21: SCh 11, 80-95.

- 695 Anointing, in Biblical and other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning: oil is a sign of abundance and joy;<sup>103</sup> it cleanses (anointing before and after a bath) and limbers (the anointing of athletes and wrestlers); oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds;<sup>104</sup> and it makes radiant with beauty, health, and strength.
- 1152 1294 Anointing with oil has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening; the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, that is, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off "the aroma of Christ."<sup>105</sup>
- 698 1295 By this anointing the confirmand receives the "mark," the *seal* of the Holy Spirit. A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object.<sup>106</sup> Hence soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their master's. A seal authenticates a juridical act or document and occasionally makes it secret.<sup>107</sup>
- 1296 Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal.<sup>108</sup> Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who  
1121 establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."<sup>109</sup> This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.<sup>110</sup>

### The celebration of Confirmation

- 1183 1297 *The consecration of the sacred chrism* is an important action that precedes the celebration of Confirmation, but is in a certain way a part of it. It is the bishop who, in the course of the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, consecrates the sacred chrism for his whole diocese. In  
1241 some Eastern Churches this consecration is even reserved to the patriarch:

103 Cf. *Deut* 11:14; *Pss* 23:5; 104:15.

104 Cf. *Isa* 1:6; *Lk* 10:34.

105 *2 Cor* 2:15.

106 Cf. *Gen* 38:18; 41:42; *Deut* 32:34; *CT* 8:6.

107 Cf. *1 Kings* 21:8; *Jer* 32:10; *Isa* 29:11.

108 Cf. *Jn* 6:27.

109 *2 Cor* 1:21-22; cf. *Eph* 1:13; 4, 30.

110 Cf. *Rev* 7:2-3; 9:4; *Ezek* 9:4-6.

The liturgy of Antioch expresses the epiclesis for the consecration of the sacred chrism (myron) in this way: "[Father . . . send your Holy Spirit] on us and on this oil which is before us and consecrate it, so that it may be for all who are anointed and marked with it holy myron, priestly myron, royal myron, anointing with gladness, clothing with light, a cloak of salvation, a spiritual gift, the sanctification of souls and bodies, imperishable happiness, the indelible seal, a buckler of faith, and a fearsome helmet against all the works of the adversary."

**1298** When Confirmation is celebrated separately from Baptism, as is the case in the Roman Rite, the Liturgy of Confirmation begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and the profession of faith by the confirmands. This clearly shows that Confirmation follows Baptism.<sup>111</sup> When adults are baptized, they immediately receive Confirmation and participate in the Eucharist.<sup>112</sup>

**1299** In the Roman Rite the bishop extends his hands over the whole group of the confirmands. Since the time of the apostles this gesture has signified the gift of the Spirit. The bishop invokes the outpouring of the Spirit in these words:

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.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.<sup>113</sup>

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**1300** The *essential rite* of the sacrament follows. In the Latin rite, "the sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: '*Accipe signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti*' [Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.]"<sup>114</sup> In the Eastern Churches of Byzantine rite, after a prayer of epiclesis, the more significant parts of the body are anointed with myron: forehead, eyes, nose, ears, lips, chest, back, hands, and feet. Each anointing is accompanied by the formula *Σφραγὶς δωρεᾶς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου* (*Signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti*): "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>115</sup>

111 Cf. SC 71.

112 Cf. CIC, can. 866.

113 OC 25.

114 Paul VI, apostolic constitution, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 663.

115 *Rituale per le Chiese orientali di rito bizantino in lingua greca*, Pars Prima (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1954), 36.

**1301** The sign of peace that concludes the rite of the sacrament signifies and demonstrates ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful.<sup>116</sup>

### III. THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION

**1302** It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

**1262-1274 1303** From this fact, Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:  
 — it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, “Abba! Father!”;<sup>117</sup>  
 — it unites us more firmly to Christ;  
 — it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;  
 — it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;<sup>118</sup>  
 — it 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.<sup>119</sup>

Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God’s presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.<sup>120</sup>

**1121 1304** Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an *indelible spiritual mark*, the “character,” which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness.<sup>121</sup>

**1268 1305** This “character” perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and “the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (*quasi ex officio*).”<sup>122</sup>

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116 Cf. St. Hippolytus, *Trad. Ap.* 21: SCh 11, 80-95.

117 *Rom* 8:15.

118 Cf. *LG* 11.

119 Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1319; *LG* 11; 12.

120 St. Ambrose, *De myst.* 7, 42: PL 16, 402-403.

121 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609; *Lk* 24:48-49.

122 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 72, 5, *ad* 2.

#### IV. WHO CAN RECEIVE THIS SACRAMENT?

**1306** Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>123</sup> Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that “the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time,”<sup>124</sup> for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete. 1212

**1307** For centuries, Latin custom has indicated “the age of discretion” as the reference point for receiving Confirmation. But in danger of death children should be confirmed even if they have not yet attained the age of discretion.<sup>125</sup>

**1308** Although Confirmation is sometimes called the “sacrament of Christian maturity,” we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need “ratification” to become effective. St. Thomas reminds us of this: 1250

Age of body does not determine age of soul. Even in childhood man can attain spiritual maturity: as the book of *Wisdom* says: “For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years.” Many children, through the strength of the Holy Spirit they have received, have bravely fought for Christ even to the shedding of their blood.<sup>126</sup>

**1309** *Preparation* for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts, and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community. The latter bears special responsibility for the preparation of confirmands.<sup>127</sup>

**1310** To receive Confirmation one must be in a state of grace. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. More intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.<sup>128</sup> 2670

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123 Cf. CIC, can. 889 § 1.

124 CIC, can. 890.

125 Cf. CIC, cann. 891; 883, 3°.

126 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 72, 8, *ad* 2; cf. *Wis* 4:8.

127 Cf. OC Introduction 3.

128 Cf. *Acts* 1:14.

1255 **1311** Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a *sponsor*. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents.<sup>129</sup>

## V. THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION

1233 **1312** The *original minister* of Confirmation is the bishop.<sup>130</sup>  
In the East, ordinarily the priest who baptizes also immediately confers Confirmation in one and the same celebration. But he does so with sacred chrism consecrated by the patriarch or the bishop, thus expressing the apostolic unity of the Church whose bonds are strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation. In the Latin Church, the same discipline applies to the Baptism of adults or to the reception into full communion with the Church of a person baptized in another Christian community that does not have valid Confirmation.<sup>131</sup>

1290 **1313** *In the Latin Rite*, the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop.<sup>132</sup> If the need arises, the bishop may grant the faculty of administering Confirmation<sup>133</sup> to priests, although it is fitting that he confer it himself, mindful that the celebration of Confirmation has been temporally separated from Baptism for this reason. Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic  
1285 origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ.

1307 **1314** If a Christian is in danger of death, any priest can give him Confirmation.<sup>134</sup> Indeed the Church desires that none of her children, even the youngest, should depart this world without having been perfected by the Holy Spirit with the gift of Christ's fullness.

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## IN BRIEF

**1315** "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had

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129 Cf. OC Introduction 5; 6; CIC, can. 893 §§ 1- 2.

130 Cf. LG 26.

131 Cf. CIC, can. 883 § 2.

132 Cf. CIC, can. 882.

133 Cf. CIC, can. 884 § 2.

134 Cf. CIC, can. 883 § 3.

not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

- 1316** Confirmation perfects Baptismal grace; it is the sacrament which gives the Holy Spirit in order to root us more deeply in the divine filiation, incorporate us more firmly into Christ, strengthen our bond with the Church, associate us more closely with her mission, and help us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds.
- 1317** Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian's soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once in one's life.
- 1318** In the East this sacrament is administered immediately after Baptism and is followed by participation in the Eucharist; this tradition highlights the unity of the three sacraments of Christian initiation. In the Latin Church this sacrament is administered when the age of reason has been reached, and its celebration is ordinarily reserved to the bishop, thus signifying that this sacrament strengthens the ecclesial bond.
- 1319** A candidate for Confirmation who has attained the age of reason 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 ecclesial community and in temporal affairs.
- 1320** The essential rite of Confirmation is anointing the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism (in the East other sense-organs as well), together with the laying on of the minister's hand and the words: "*Accipe signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti*" (Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.) in the Roman rite, or: *Signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti* (the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit) in the Byzantine rite.
- 1321** When Confirmation is celebrated separately from Baptism, its connection with Baptism is expressed, among other ways, by the renewal of baptismal promises. The celebration of Confirmation during the Eucharist helps underline the unity of the sacraments of Christian initiation.
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