



How Confirmation Transforms Us to Act

Our world today values accomplishments over almost anything else. Make the honor roll, earn the lead role in the school play, make the game winning shot, get into the best college. What we can *do*, the world tells us, somehow says something about our value and worth. Now, our accomplishments *are* important, and we should always strive to do our best! But there is a principle that runs deeper, that shows us we have infinite worth and value *before* we could ever do anything to earn it. This principle is the dignity of the human person, which means that every human person, at every stage of life, is of infinite worth and value because, first and foremost, every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. This dignity can never be lost or taken away and every human -- the rich and the poor, the unborn and the elderly, the healthy and the terminally ill -- deserves to be treated in accord with this dignity. You see, the piece the world leaves out is that what we *do* can only flow from who *we are*.

Over the past several handouts, we've been talking about our ultimate purpose as human persons, which is to be with God forever in heaven. This calling, this vocation, is beyond our own abilities. We need certain special powers that we cannot earn but need to receive as a freely given gift by God in the grace of the sacraments. Three of the sacraments are so transformative that they change who we are as people *forever*. The three sacraments that leave a permanent mark on our soul, what is called an indelible character, are Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. Once someone receives any of these sacraments, who they are is changed for all eternity. Once they are received, the mark of these sacraments can never be lost. Since *what* we do flows out of *who* we are, when *who* we are is changed in one of these sacraments, *what* we can do also changes.

We will focus on the Sacrament of Confirmation and see how the graces it gives makes us able to act in a way different than we were capable of before receiving it. Receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation is intimately related to Baptism, but is not some optional “add on” that a Catholic can choose or not choose to receive. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches “the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. 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’” (no. 1285). When we receive Confirmation, we are receiving a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like the apostles received on the very first Pentecost (no. 1302). In Confirmation, our identity as adopted sons and daughters of God the Father is strengthened, and we are more closely united to God the Son, Jesus Christ (no. 1303). Confirmation increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit and joins us more closely and perfectly to the Church (no. 1303). Confirmation also “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 more boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross” (no. 1303).

In summary, Confirmation changes *who* we are and, as a result, drives us to *do* things we would not otherwise be able to do. It equips us to be able to live the Catholic life in a world that is hostile to it, in a way that brings joy to our lives and offers a witness of the power of Christ and His Church to the world. Confirmation gives us the graces we need to cooperate with in order to become saints, and to help others become saints, too. This is a lot of responsibility! But this is why each of us was created, to know and to love God forever in heaven, and to do so with as many other people as possible.