



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 30 May 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Continuing with the theme of Confirmation, or Chrismation, today I would like to highlight “the intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 71).

Before receiving the spiritual anointing that confirms and strengthens the grace of Baptism, the confirmands are called to renew the promises made one day by their parents and godparents. Now they themselves profess the faith of the Church, ready to respond “I believe” to the questions asked by the Bishop; ready, in particular, to believe “in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who came upon the apostles at Pentecost and today is given to [them] sacramentally in confirmation” (*Rite of Confirmation [rc]*, n. 23).

As the coming of the Holy Spirit requires hearts gathered in prayer (cf. Acts 1:14), after the silent prayer of the community, the Bishop, extending his hands over the confirmands, asks God to instill in them his Holy Spirit Paraclete. There is only one Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:4), but in coming to us he brings with him an abundance of gifts: wisdom, understanding, right judgment, courage, knowledge, reverence, and awe in the presence of God (cf. *rc*, n. 25). We have heard the Bible passage with these gifts which the Holy Spirit brings. According to the Prophet Isaiah (11:2), these are the seven virtues the Spirit poured out on the Messiah for the fulfilment of his mission. Saint Paul also describes the abundant fruits of the Spirit which are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22). The one Spirit distributes the multiple gifts which enrich the one Church: he is the Author of diversity, but at the same time the Creator of unity. Thus the Spirit gives all these riches which, although different, create harmony, that is, the unity of all these spiritual riches that we Christians have.

Through the tradition established by the Apostles, the Spirit, who completes the grace of Baptism, is communicated through the laying on of hands (cf. Acts 8:15-17, 19:5-6; Heb 6:2). To this biblical gesture, to better express the outpouring of the Spirit which permeates those who receive it, early on an anointing with perfumed oil called *chrism*^[1] was added, which is still in use today, in both the East and West (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1289).

The oil — chrism — is a therapeutic and cosmetic substance which by entering the bodily tissues medicates wounds and perfumes the limbs; because of these qualities it is used in biblical and liturgical symbolism to express the action of the Holy Spirit who consecrates and permeates the baptized, adorning them with charisms. The Sacrament is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, administered by the Bishop by the imposition of his hand and with the words: “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit”.^[2] The Holy Spirit is the invisible *gift* that is bestowed and the chrism is its visible *seal*.

In receiving on the forehead the sign of the cross with fragrant oil, confirmands thus receive an indelible spiritual imprint, the ‘character’, which confirms them more perfectly to Christ and gives them the grace to spread the ‘good aroma’ among men (cf. 2 Cor 2:15).

Let us listen again to Saint Ambrose’s invitation to the newly confirmed. He said: “recollect that thou hast received the spiritual seal ... and preserve what thou hast received. God the Father hath sealed thee, Christ the Lord hath confirmed thee, and hath given the earnest of the Spirit in thy heart” (*On the Mysteries*, 7:42; csel 73:106; cf. ccc n. 1303). The Holy Spirit is an unmerited gift, to be received with gratitude, making room for his boundless creativity. It is a gift to be safeguarded with care, yielded to with docility, allowing oneself to be moulded, like wax, by the warmth of his charity, so as to “reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world” (Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 23).

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Scotland, Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia and the United States of America. I thank the Korean athletes for their presentation: this has been a display of the commitment to peace, representing the two Koreas together! A message of peace for all of humanity! Thank you! I also offer a prayerful greeting to the Felician Sisters presently celebrating their General Chapter. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick*, and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow we will conclude the Marian month. May the Mother of God be your refuge in happy moments and in more difficult times, and may she be your families’ guide, so they may become a domestic

hearth of prayer, of mutual understanding and of giving.

[1] Here is a passage of the prayer of Consecration of the Chrism: “*And so, Father, we ask you to bless † this oil you have created. Fill it with the power of your Holy Spirit through Christ your Son. It is from him that chrism takes its name and with chrism you have anointed for yourself priests and kings, prophets and martyrs*”.... For those “*anointed with this chrism*” may it “*wash away the evil they have inherited*” and “*make them temples of your glory, radiant with*” the fragrance of a holy life (cf. *Blessing of Oils and Chrism*, n. 25).

[2] The phrases “Receive the Holy Spirit” and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” are found in Jn 20:22, and Acts 2:38, 10:45-47.
