

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” (Ezek 36:26-27)

✠ Lecture X: The Sacrament of Confirmation ✠

In the biological order, a creature must first be born, and then it must grow. Likewise, in the spiritual order of grace, we are born again in Baptism and then we must grow in the spiritual life and bear the fruits of the Spirit (**Gal 5:22-23**). We also need to acquire the spiritual power that will enable us to overcome Satan and his army “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (**Eph 6:12**). The Holy Sacrament of Confirmation induces us into God’s spiritual army and the lay priesthood of believers. Our body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 6:19**) who helps us grow in the spiritual life. Confirmation is a kind of Pentecost to the baptized person.

✠ Institution of the Sacrament:

The roots of this Sacrament are clear in both the Old and New Testaments. In his sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter quotes the famous words of Joel the Prophet; “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh” (**Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28**). Other Old Testament prophets who speak of this same promise of the Spirit include Ezekiel (**Ezek 16:9; 36:26-27**). Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Holy Sacrament through His various promises for granting the Holy Spirit:

- “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (**Jn 7:37-38**)
- “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (**Jn 14:16-17**)
- “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (**Jn 14:26**)
- “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (**Jn 15:26**)
- “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him to you.” (**Jn 16:7**)
- “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” (**Acts 1:4-5**)

✠ Independence From Baptism:

- “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. **They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (**Acts 8:14-17**)
- “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.**” (**Acts 19:5-6**)
- The independence of Confirmation (laying of hands) from Baptism is explicit in **Heb 6:2** where the apostle distinguishes “the doctrine of baptisms” from the doctrine “of laying on of hands.”

✠ Administration of the Sacrament:

Our fathers the Apostles administered this Sacrament by laying on of hands directly after Baptism as mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts (**Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6**). Laying on of hands for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is a specific rite of the Apostles (and their successors the Bishops). In **Acts 8**, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached and baptized the people of Samaria but did not grant them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (**Acts 8:14-17**). As the number of believers increased, it was not possible for the Apostles to wander all countries and cities to lay hands on the baptized. So they established Chrismation (Gr. *chrismatis*, “anointing”) in addition to the laying on of hands:

- “You have an **anointing** from the Holy One.” (**1 Jn 2:20**)
- “The **anointing** which you have received from Him abides in you ... the same **anointing** teaches you concerning all things.” (**1 Jn 2:27**)
- “He who establishes us with you in Christ and has **anointed** us is God, who also has **sealed** us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (**2 Cor 1:21-22**)
- “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption.” (**Eph 4:30**)

✠ History of The Holy Oil (Myron → Greek word that means perfume):

Our fathers the Apostles took the spices that were on our Lord’s body in the tomb and the spices that the women had prepared (**Lk 24:1**), melted all in pure olive oil, and prayed on it. They decreed that this holy oil be used as means of anointing the baptized in order to confirm and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. They also decided that their successors, the Bishops, renew the holy oil by adding to the original so that the Churches never run out. When St. Mark came to Alexandria, he brought with him some of that holy oil. In the beginning of the fourth century, H.H. Pope Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20th Pope of Alexandria, decided to renew the holy oil. So he gathered all the spices and perfumes that God had ordered Moses the Prophet to use in making the holy ointment (**Ex 30**) and added them to the remainder of the holy oil that St. Mark had brought with him to Egypt. St. Athanasius sent some of the holy oil to the Bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Constantinople with the recipe that he used in manufacturing it and they all received it with rejoicing. The holy oil was manufactured 29 times in the Coptic Orthodox Church (thus far).

✠ Chrismation of Infants:

The Orthodox Churches administer Chrismation immediately following baptism in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible and the Apostolic Tradition, but the Roman Catholic Church has started since the 13th century to delay the confirmation of infants until they are 7 or 12 years old and consequently delays their participation in the Holy Eucharist. This delay is totally unjustified, wasn’t St. John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb (**Lk 1:15**)?

✠ Chrismation & Our Salvation:

H.H. Pope Shenouda III said, “We can never be saved without this gift of the Holy Spirit because our whole spiritual life is the response of our will to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Unless we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, all our life will be futile and subject to perdition. It is a gift that we receive through the Sacrament of the Holy Unction and for which we pray continually saying ‘Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me’ (**Ps 51:11**) otherwise we shall perish.”

* This lecture is adapted from “*The Sacraments of the Church*” by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.