



CONFIRMATION

The Sacraments express the realities of human experience especially those of belonging, forgiveness, healing and nourishment. These human experiences are celebrated as rituals through the Church and, as a faith community, we believe them to be source and sign of God's action in our lives to take up the challenge of the call to share directly in the mission of Christ within the community, the mission of the Church in the world.

As one of the three Sacraments of Initiation, Confirmation has been traditionally understood as the Sacrament that emphasizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Initiation begins with the water of Baptism, is signified with the Chrism of Confirmation and is nourished by the Eucharist. Like Baptism, Confirmation is received only once.

Historically Confirmation was originally part of Baptism. The immersion in water marked the dividing line between the old way of life and the new way - the acknowledgement of Jesus as the one who saves - and the laying on of hands signified the coming of the Holy Spirit. Together with the Sacrament of Eucharist they were celebrated for both adults and children during the Easter Vigil.

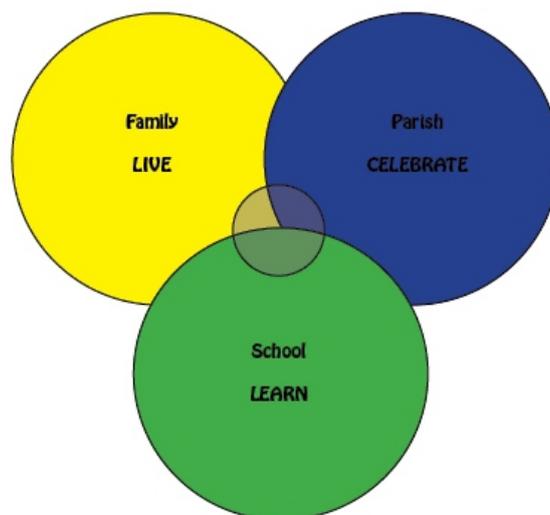
The Apostles were the first to signify the coming of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. Later, the anointing with the oil of Chrism became part of the initiation ceremony and was performed by the Bishop. However, as the numbers of candidates increased difficulties arose when Bishops could not be present to confirm people at the time of their Baptism.

Bishops retain their link with Confirmation by blessing the Chrism Oil at the Mass of the Holy Oils just prior to Easter. This blessed Oil is used by the priest at Confirmation.

In 1910 Pope Pius X ordered that children be allowed to receive the Eucharist around the age of discretion - between 7 and 9 years of age. Confirmation was still supposed to come before Eucharist but in practice this did not happen. This resulted in a change of order of Sacraments of Initiation for the first time to Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

In the 1960's the second Vatican Council reviewed the Rites of Initiation and worked towards restoring the original order of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

The RCIA model was used from the early 1980's for the formation of adults in this diocese and it was also decided that this would be used for children. The practical implications of this for our parishes has been the development of our family based-parish coordinated-school supported Sacramental Program.



Fr Gary Jones - Daylesford & Creswick Parish Priest