



As with all the sacraments, Confirmation uses symbolic gestures which accompany words of prayer.

These symbols are:

- Beautiful
- Ancient
- Dramatic
- Sacred
- Profound
- Part of our Christian ancestry

1. Laying on of hands

The Bishop stretches out his hand over the children and calls down the power of the Holy Spirit.

A profound gesture which is also used in other sacraments:

- * anointing of the sick
- * ordination of a priest
- * over the bread and wine at Mass, so that they become the body and blood of Christ.

In Confirmation, the Bishop calls upon the Spirit to overshadow your child and to fill him/her with the gifts of the Spirit. He will name those gifts as part of this prayer.

2. Anointing with Chrism

Chrism: a special oil blessed by the Bishop. Perfumed. (We are reminded of St Paul's words that knowledge of God is like perfume that fills the world.

Anointing - ancient significance. A symbol of being called and strengthened for an important task.

- * Kings and queens anointed - indicating the dignity of office.
- * Soldiers and athletes anointed before battle/competition.

In Confirmation, your child is being anointed to go forth in life as a Catholic, as a disciple of Jesus, as a person of the Spirit, with confidence and strength.

'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. Why 'sealed'? Symbolism: a legal contract when signed and sealed is considered authentic and binding. To be sealed with the Spirit is to be confirmed as a Christian believer.

3. The Sign of Peace

- * Also used at Mass
- * More than a friendly greeting, a sign of our unity. We are one people of God, one body of Christ.

When the bishop says 'Peace be with you', he is saying on behalf of the community that your child belongs. He/she is one with us, the Church.

Spirituality in the home

A suggestion

Let the 'big' symbols of Confirmation resonate in the 'little' signs and symbols of everyday life. For example:

1. As you *lay hands* on your child (to comfort, to guide, to help) be reminded of the laying on of hands at Confirmation.
2. As you rub ointment or sunscreen into your child's skin, be reminded of the *anointing* they will receive at Confirmation.
3. As you show affection to your child, let this be a living sign of the *peace* of Christ.

