

RENEWING FAMILY FAITH

Why Catholic/The Celebration of the Christian Mystery/7. Confirmation, a Sacrament of Initiation

We Believe

We Celebrate

We Live

We Pray

OUR STORY

From Slave to Saint

Benedict was born a slave in San Fratello, Italy. His parents were brought from Africa to Sicily in a slave ship. Living as slaves in a Catholic land, they eventually became Catholics, and shared their new faith with their son.

All through his childhood and early teen years, Benedict worked in his master's fields. He had no chance for schooling, and grew up unable to read or write. When he was eighteen, his master freed him. No longer a slave, Benedict earned money as a day laborer and shared what he received with those who had even less. He cared for the poor in the city who were sick.

Still a young man, Benedict felt attracted to a

more solitary, prayerful site. He joined a group of hermits who lived in the hills not far from San Fratello. Benedict was happy in his new life and made a deep impression on his fellow hermits. When Jerome Lanza, their leader, died, the community chose Benedict to replace him. Under his guidance the group grew and prospered.

Pope Pius IV was concerned about the number of small groups or hermits springing up in Europe. He ordered them to join the larger, more established religious communities. Benedict decided to join the Franciscans. They accepted him as a lay brother and

Continued on the back...



St. Benedict the Black

Courtesy Franciscan Friars, Trinity Stores, www.trinitystores.com

Confirming Faith

In the Old Testament, the prophets proclaimed that the Spirit of God would be upon the Messiah. The Holy Spirit guided and enlightened Jesus along every step of his journey. During his Baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him. Jesus then promised the Spirit of God to his disciples and to all who would believe. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the "mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). We, too, are promised that same Spirit.

In the early Church, Confirmation was given at Baptism. Due, however, to the number of infant Baptisms, the increase in rural parishes, and the difficulty in getting the bishop to all the baptismal celebrations, it became more practical to celebrate these two sacraments of initiation separately.

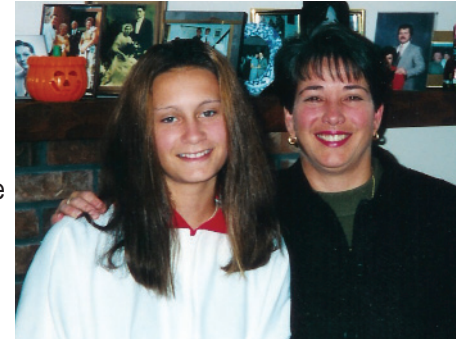
The Western custom of delaying Confirmation until the age of discretion brings with it a secondary benefit. It offers individuals baptized as infants the opportunity to publicly and personally renew the baptismal profession of faith previously made for them by their parents and godparents.

Today, the young person can freely announce his or her own desire to follow Jesus and to live out the call and mission of Jesus in his or her own life within the community of the Church. Now the person can say, "I recognize that God is acting in my life, helping me to overcome my sinfulness, and calling me to be part of a loving community of faith. I want to say 'yes.'"

Through Confirmation, all of us, as the people of God, are empowered to practice our faith in the ordinary and extraordinary circumstances of our lives. Whether we are at work, in our homes, or in the social or political arena, we can live out the values of faith.

Reflect

- What does the sacrament of Confirmation mean to you? How did you celebrate it?
- How do you recognize the gifts of the Holy Spirit in your life?



Courtesy Susan Capurso

BLESSINGS

God our Father,
complete the work you have begun
and keep the gifts of your Holy Spirit
active in the hearts of your people.
Make them ready to live his Gospel
and eager to do his will.

May they never be ashamed
to proclaim to all the world Christ crucified
living and reigning for ever and ever.

Amen

Excerpt from the English translation of *Rite of Confirmation, 2nd Edition* © 1975, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All Rights reserved.

Our Story

Continued from the front...

assigned him to be a cook at their friary in Palermo. They came to admire and respect Benedict so much that they chose him to be their Guardian. Later they named him Master of Novices and trusted him with the training of new Franciscans, even though he still was unable to read or write.

His goodness and wisdom became known beyond the walls of the friary. People of all classes came to the Friary to seek his advice, prayers, and help.

In 1807, Pope Pius VII canonized him. St. Benedict the Black is the patron of blacks in the United States. His feast day is April 4.

Janaan Manternach

TABLE TALK

- The gifts of the Holy Spirit, freely given supernatural gifts to graced persons, are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.
- How have you experienced any of these gifts in your life?

Pondering the Word

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”

John 16:13

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, dwells in you by Baptism.

Reflect on the power of knowing truth and pray to live it accordingly.

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PARENTING

Job Changes

What kind of stress and strain does the possibility of a job change put on marriage? Sometimes the change may involve a move to another city or state. Big decisions are required. If both partners are working, a decision must be made on whose career to follow. Decisions can be based on finances, on egos, on working conditions, on the needs of family. Good, honest communication with each other is a must. Sometimes, to make things easier, one partner may just give in. But will that eventually cause resentment and anger? These areas must be explored honestly and openly, as well as prayerfully. In most marriages, it is not just the couple's dynamics at work, but also those of the parents, in-laws, siblings, children and friends.

For reflection:

- Have you had to deal with a job change or a major move?
- Did you practice good, honest communication with each other?
- What would you do the same or differently? Why?
- What makes a move easier?

Adapted from Maureen S. Hagan, *Nurturing Our Commitment, The Early Married Years*, RENEW International

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Civic Responsibility

“The U.S. Bishops in their message, *Political Responsibility: Revitalizing American Democracy*, wrote, ‘We are Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. We come from differing ideological and political persuasions. But we are all called to a common commitment to ensure that political life serves the common good and the human person. Our call to political responsibility is neither a partisan nor sectarian appeal, but a call to reinvigorate the democratic process as a place for debate about what kind of society we want to be, about what values and priorities should guide our nation.’

“Politics is the process of making government, but making government is not just limited to the halls of government. However, it is the way we live. Politics is an important component of our culture and lifestyle. Politics does not begin and end on Election Day. It is an ongoing process that affects our jobs, the costs of food and shelter, the kinds of schools our children and grandchildren attend, community recreation, libraries, the ecological health of our communities and regions.”

- What things can I personally do to become a more responsible citizen?
- Is there an issue or situation in my town or city that affects the common good that I can be involved in? How can I be involved in that issue or situation?

Mary Ann Jeselson & Steve Jeselson, *Civic Responsibility What's It All About?*, RENEW International

In Confirmation, the Christian is anointed with oil that

“is rich in meaning: oil is a sign of abundance and joy....”

Explore the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. See paragraphs 1293-1294.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16