



# Holy Confirmation

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“Onward Christian Soldiers”

From Sabine Baring-Gould’s

*The Golden Gate*

Fr. Baring-Gould is most famous for his hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”.

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Confirmation means “the making strong.” In the Early Church this Sacrament was called The Anointing,<sup>1</sup> The Laying on of Hands,<sup>2</sup> and The Sealing.<sup>3</sup> Under these names it is often spoken of in the New Testament. It derived these names from the two outward signs used in it, the laying on the head of the Bishop’s hands, and the anointing on the brow with consecrated oil.

In the Holy Eastern Church the Laying on of Hands has ceased to be observed. In the English Church the Unction with holy oil has been omitted [in the past]. The omission of either of these outward signs does not invalidate the Sacrament. To the ancient custom of anointing on the brow with holy oil at Confirmation allusion seems to be made in Revelation 7, wherein is described the sealing of the servants of God on their foreheads by the Angel. Oil was used under the Old Dispensation<sup>4</sup> to anoint

the temple of the Lord. As Christians are the temple of the Holy Ghost,<sup>5</sup> a similar unction befits them.

The *outward sign* is therefore either Laying on of Hands or Unction.

The *right person* to administer Confirmation is the Bishop. After Philip, the deacon, had converted and baptized the Samaritans, St. Peter and St. John, two Bishops, were sent down from Jerusalem to confirm them.<sup>6</sup>

The *institution* of the Confirmation is due to our Lord, for St. Paul calls it one of the “principles,” that is, chief things, “of the doctrine” or teaching “of Christ,”<sup>7</sup> joining it with Baptism, repentance, and the doctrines of the Resurrection and of the Judgment, as of equal importance.

The *benefits* of Confirmation are: - 1. It confers spiritual growth. 2. It perfects Baptism, being a seal to the

Baptismal covenant. 3. It confers the Holy Ghost in His sevenfold gifts<sup>8</sup>; WISDOM, whereby we learn to distinguish and choose between good and evil; UNDERSTANDING, whereby we are enabled to grasp and realize the articles of the Christian faith; COUNSEL, whereby we are given power to detect the wiles of the devil; STRENGTH, whereby we are enabled to resist the devil; KNOWLEDGE, whereby we are given insight into God’s will; GODLINESS, whereby, having learned God’s will we learn to love it; FEAR, whereby we are rendered fearful of breaking God’s laws and resisting His will.

We have an example of the benefits in the Apostles.<sup>9</sup> They were terrified even to the denial of Christ before the descent of the Holy Ghost; but after His visitation they were filled with holy boldness, and ready gladly to suffer bonds and imprisonment and death for Him.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27

<sup>2</sup> Acts 8:17, 18; Hebrews 6:2

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:13; 4:30

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 30:25

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19

<sup>6</sup> Acts 8:14-17

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 6:1, 2

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<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 11:2, 3

<sup>9</sup> Acts 4:13