

By  
**Joe Sixpack**



## **A Jungle Jaunt with the Holy Spirit**

Tommy Harmon was the star halfback on the University of Michigan football team from 1938 to 1940. He was drafted into the Army Air Corps when World War II began, and worked himself up to a lieutenant and pilot of a bomber.

While flying over the wild jungles of Brazil, he and his three companions had to bail out. They landed in three different places. Tommy landed in a tree. The only things he had with him were a compass, small glass bottle of water, and a rosary. He broke the bottle of water while coming down from the tree, thus making survival all the more tenuous.

The jungle was filled with heavy growth and large, poisonous snakes and wild animals. He knew that if he headed east, he'd reach the ocean. At night he'd look for a dry place and would pray to the Holy Spirit and say the rosary. His travels were challenging, even wading through marshes up to his hips.

After days of fighting the hazards of the jungle, he finally found a path that led to the hut of an Indian. The Indian took him in for the night, then showed him how to get back to civilization in the morning. When Tommy reached a city, reporters asked him how he made it through the wild jungle, while his crew were probably starved and killed by wild animals.

Tommy said, "The Holy Spirit dwells in my soul. He was given to me when the bishop confirmed me. I kept praying to the Holy Spirit that He might lead me. I also prayed my rosary continually. I must have said a million Hail Marys. I was sure the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother would lead me back to safety.

Wow! I only hope my own faith would be as strong in a similar situation!

The Holy Spirit lives lives in our soul after confirmation, as long as we are in a state of grace—that is free of mortal sin. He was given to us in a special way at confirmation. He'll not only help us to be good Catholics, but also help us to find our way through the difficulties of life. Turn to Him with confidence when you need light and strength.

Confirmation today seems to be viewed as more of a rite of passage—a coming of age event—rather than a sacrament. Confirmation is the sacrament instituted by Christ that makes baptized persons "more perfectly bound to the Church and... enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence [baptized persons] are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

Confirmation increases sanctifying grace in our soul, increases the supernatural virtues, and gives an increase in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark and for this reason can't be repeated. It enables us to courageously profess our faith, even under the threat of death. Indeed, without the sacrament of confirmation there'd be far fewer martyrs in the Church's glorious history.

Although it's not called by the name confirmation in the Bible, we see it clearly in use by the apostles in the historical passages of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> Since the apostles did and taught all and only that which Christ commanded, we're assured by their actions that Jesus instituted this sacrament.

The ordinary minister of confirmation is the diocesan bishop, but priests may also confirm under certain conditions. For example, in case of emergency (impending death) or with the bishop's prior permission (e.g., institutional situations, such as prisons or nursing homes), a priest may confirm.

Confirmation must be received by those in a state of grace. If it's received by someone in a state of mortal sin, it'll still be valid, but illicitly received. God will withhold the special graces of Confirmation until the confirmed is reconciled to God by way of a good confession. Furthermore, if confirmation is received in a state of mortal sin, the confirmed commits the additional mortal sin of sacrilege. This, too, must be confessed, along with all the Communion received since the last good confession, as well as the sacrilege attached to them. It's actually easier to just remain in a state of grace.

Confirmation not only grants us some very special privileges through the Holy Spirit, but it also gives us some new obligations. That shouldn't surprise or discourage us. After all, no privilege is worth having if it doesn't come with some responsibilities as well. Every Catholic has an obligation to study the faith for the entirety of his life. This is how we prepare ourselves to share the faith with others, thus responding positively to the sacramental graces of Confirmation. Failure to study is a rejection of the graces God gives us through Confirmation.

Studying the faith takes many different forms for many people. Obviously a person capable of doctorate level studies would continue his studies of the faith differently than someone with an IQ of 90. For some it may be books. Others CDs or DVDs. Still others might be doing the best they can with simply reading articles from good, orthodox magazines and newspapers (*Catholic Answers Magazine* and *The Wanderer* newspaper come immediately to mind). No matter what avenue you choose, be assured you have a moral obligation to continue your studies of the Catholic faith. (Hey, I've got an idea! How about the weekly webinars I host?)

For those of you who have kids to yet be confirmed, you need to be thinking about the selection of godparents. Although it's a great honor to become the godparent of one who is to be confirmed, it shouldn't be viewed as a position or office of honor. It should instead be viewed as an active participation in the life of a soul for the purpose of helping the soul to obtain spiritual perfection and perfect unity with God. Being a godparent is an awesome responsibility, and God will judge a godparent on the basis of how seriously he undertook this responsibility. So think about who'd be best to help your child become a saint should you suddenly be out of the picture.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. Acts 8:14-17; 19:6