

# ST. THOMAS PARISH SACRAMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM

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## **AN INSIGHT INTO THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

by Monsignor Vincent M. Walsh

- Confirmation is the sacrament [of initiation] by which a baptized person receives a greater incorporation into the Holy Spirit and the Church.
- Confirmation is so closely linked to Baptism that Eastern Catholic Churches have this anointing taking place immediately after Baptism is administered. In the West, including the Roman Catholic Church, adult converts to the Church receive Confirmation at the same time as their Baptism or Profession into the Church. Therefore, only in the West and usually only in cases of infant Baptism, are the two sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation separated by a number of years.
- The Early Church had two classes of believers, those who saw the Risen Jesus and those who believed in Jesus through the preaching of eyewitnesses. For those who saw the Risen Jesus, scripture records special moments for their unique receiving of the Holy Spirit, given to them for their worldwide mission.
- In the early centuries, Confirmation generally comprised one single ceremony with Baptism. With the multiplication of infant Baptisms throughout the years and the increase in parishes, it became impossible for the bishop to baptize everyone (as was done in the beginning).
- In the Western Church, the strong desire to have the bishop complete the Baptism, led to the separation of the two sacraments.
- From the third century on a second rite of laying on of hands that completes the sacrament of Baptism is clearly documented by Christian writers. By the fifth century, Pope Innocent I recalled that this completion of sacramental Baptism was reserved to bishops and distinguished Confirmation from the regular anointing given by all priests at Baptism. Since then, the two sacraments have been clearly distinguished in the Western Church.