A Pastoral Letter on the Holy Spirit
To the Clergy and Faithful of the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter
BY MOST REV. STEVEN J. LOPES
COME, HOLY GHOST

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Introduction

COME, HOLY GHOST!

From the very beginning, this is the fervent prayer of the Church. It expresses our longing for that intimate sense of God’s loving presence and action in our lives, an abiding with God who sanctifies us and gives us life. But, to paraphrase the first disciples at Ephesus, who is this Holy Spirit whose coming is so long desired (cf. Acts 19:2)? Reflecting on the first ten years of our ecclesial life in the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter, we can answer the question in this way: the Holy Spirit brought our Ordinariate into being!

At the very outset of the Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum coetibus, Pope Benedict XVI notes that it is the Holy Spirit who has prompted groups of Anglicans to enter the Catholic Church. In this context he summarizes the doctrinal teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the nature of the Church:

In recent times the Holy Spirit has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full Catholic communion individually as well as corporately....

The Church, a people gathered into the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, as "a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people" ... Precisely for this reason, before shedding his blood for the salvation of the world, the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father for the unity of his disciples.

It is the Holy Spirit, the principle of unity, which establishes the Church as a communion. He is the principle of the unity of the faithful in the teaching of the Apostles, in the breaking of the bread and in prayer.1

1 • Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum coetibus, Preamble. In this section, the Constitution cites the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, Unitatis redintegratio, nos. 1 and 2, as well as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen gentium, no. 13.
The recent canonization of Saint John Henry Newman provides a most welcome opportunity to explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our lives. In acquainting ourselves with the Cardinal’s writings, which in so many ways resonate with and anticipate the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, we will learn how he was taught to pray by the Holy Spirit. In the first two sections of this pastoral letter I would like to consider some of his insights on this topic. From there, we proceed to a focused reflection on the theology of Confirmation, the Sacrament of the Spirit, and on the necessary preparation for receiving the Sacraments of Initiation.

2 • Fr. Ian Ker, the author of one the most celebrated biographies of Cardinal Newman, has written a book on this very subject: *Newman on Vatican II* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

3 • In what follows I rely on the excellent presentation given in Donald Graham, *From Eastertide to Ecclesia: John Henry Newman, the Holy Spirit, & the Church* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011).

*Photo by Josue Vásquez-Weber*
PART I • PAGE 5

The Holy Spirit in
THE LIFE OF CHRIST

In one of his meditations written as a Catholic, Saint John Henry Newman addresses the Holy Spirit: “When I was young, Thou didst put into my heart a special devotion to Thee. Thou hast taken me up in my youth, and in my age Thou wilt not forsake me.” Newman’s relationship with the Holy Spirit grew and developed over a lifetime. The theological starting place for his relationship is clearly the role played by the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

Newman understood that the Incarnation of Christ is the central truth of the Gospel as well as the source of the sacramental life of the Church. His study of the patristic Fathers led him to view the mystery of the Word-made-flesh with a breadth that was surprising in nineteenth-century England. The Liberalism of the patristic Fathers led him to view the mystery of the Word-made-flesh with a Gospel as well as the source of the sacramental life of the Church. His study of

It would seem then to be certain, that Ignatius considers our life and salvation to lie, not in the Atonement by itself, but in the Incarnation; but neither in the Incarnation nor Atonement as past events, but, as present facts, in an existing mode, in which our Saviour comes to us; or, so to speak, more plainly, in our Saviour Himself, who is God in our flesh, and not only so, but in flesh which has been offered upon the Cross in sacrifice, which has died and has risen. The being made man, the being crucified in atonement, the being raised again, are the three past events to which the Eternal Son has vouchsafed to become to us what he is, a Saviour; and those who omit the Resurrection in their view of the divine economy, are as really defective in faith as if they omitted the Crucifixion. On the Cross He paid the debt of the world, but as He could not have been crucified without first taking flesh, so again He could not, as it would seem, apply His atonement without first rising again. Accordingly, St. Ignatius speaks of our being saved and living not simply in the Atonement, but ... in the flesh and blood of the risen Lord, first sacrificed for us, then communicated to us.”

The Incarnation began when Mary offered her fiat. Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, she conceived Jesus, the eternal Son of God who entered into the world of time and space. Both as an Anglican and as a Catholic, Newman recognized that Our Lady’s vocation to be the Mother of God incarnate embraced her whole being—she became a totus tuus to God. In speaking of the witness of the early Fathers (Justin, Tertullian, and Irenaeus) to Mary’s role as the New Eve, Newman observed that what is especially noticeable in these three writers, is, that they do not speak of the Blessed Virgin merely as the physical instrument of our Lord’s taking flesh, but as an intelligent, responsible cause of it; her faith and obedience being accessories to the Incarnation, and gaining it as her reward. … [T]hey declare she co-operated in our salvation not merely by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon her body, but by specific holy acts, the effect of the Holy Ghost within her soul.” Mary’s fiat was an expression of her free will; indeed, the greatest expression of assent to God ever given by a human person. Her assent emerged from a life in which the Holy Spirit was ever active, even from the very moment of her Immaculate Conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne. In Mary we see that, far from overruling human freedom, the work of God’s grace enhances it.

While emphasizing here the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Our Lady, Newman is abundantly clear in many of his writings that the Holy Spirit plays a role in the life and mission of Christ.


God’s creative and saving acts are the work of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Indeed, the mystery of the Trinity is revealed to us (to the extent we can comprehend it as finite creatures) precisely through the saving events of salvation history. The Son and the Holy Spirit are sent from the Father: their roles are unified, complementary, and distinct. It is true that Christ’s humanity draws its holiness from its union with His divinity; it is also true that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit, he was justified by the Spirit, he was declared to be the well-beloved Son by the Holy Spirit, he did great works in the Spirit, he offered himself to death by the Eternal Spirit, he was raised from the dead by the Spirit.  

In speaking of Christ’s Resurrection, Newman specifically states:

> Here I would observe of this part of the wonderful Economy of Redemption, that God the Son and the Holy Ghost have so acted together in their separate Persons, as to make it difficult for us creatures always to discriminate what belongs to each respectively. Christ rises by His own power, yet the Holy Ghost is said to raise Him; hence, the expression in St. Paul, "according to the Spirit of Holiness," [Rom 1:4] as applied to His resurrection, may be taken to stand either for His Divine nature or for the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity.

While it may be difficult to distinguish what belongs to God the Son and what belongs to the Holy Spirit in the work of our salvation, Newman holds that the office of mediation suits the Son and the office of life-giving suits the Spirit. As the Lord and Giver of Life the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the earthly life of Jesus from his Incarnation and birth until His last breath. It is He, this same life-giving Spirit, who imparts life to the glorified, risen humanity of Jesus and communicates that life to us. Newman’s thought on life in the Holy Spirit begins and ends in the experience of the abiding presence of God in his soul. This experience, however, deepens as he grows in his own intellectual understanding of faith. Intimacy with the Spirit is communicated and indeed clarified within the community of disciples the Spirit himself has gathered: the visible Church. To understand Newman’s experience means looking at the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

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7 • See John Henry Newman, "Righteousness not of us, but in us" in Parochial and Plain Sermons, vol. 10, p. 139.

Newman’s reflection on the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus, though perhaps theologically dense, is nevertheless important. It is the same Holy Spirit who unites us to the crucified and glorified humanity of the Son of God, and in this way brings about our salvation. In his ninth lecture on Justification, entitled “Righteousness, the Fruit of our Lord’s Resurrection,” Newman teaches that Christ atoned for our sins in his own Person and justifies us through his Spirit. He writes:

“For He Himself was raised again and “justified” by the Spirit; and what was wrought in Him is repeated in us who are His brethren, and the complement and ratification of His work. What took place in Him as an Origin, is continued on in the succession of those who inherit His fullness, and is the cause of its continuance. He is said to be “justified by the Spirit,” because it was by the Spirit that He was raised again, proved innocent, made to triumph over His enemies, declared the Son of God, and exalted on the holy Hill of Sion. … This, I say, was his justification; and ours consists in our new birth also, and His was the beginning of ours.”

9 • Newman, Justification, pp. 206-7
Indeed, the Holy Spirit does far more than apply the fruits of Christ’s Atonement to us. He does something entirely new:

The Holy Ghost, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple. ... It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvelous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter’s forcible language, he becomes “partaker of the Divine Nature,” and has “power” or authority, as St. John says, “to become the Son of God.” Or, to use the words of St. Paul, “he is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” His rank is new; his parentage and service new. He is “of God,” and “is not his own,” “of vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

This wonderful transformation of the human person in grace is wrought in us through the sacrament of Baptism. To the Anglican Newman, this theology of sacramental grace signaled a profound change in his understanding of the nature of the Church, a change that eventually brought him into the Catholic Church. As a young man John Henry believed in justification by faith alone and consequently rejected the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. For him, the young and Protestant Newman, the true communion of saints is found in the spiritual and invisible Church. His Apologia pro Vita Sua eloquently describes how his study slowly but surely led him to embrace the idea of a visible Church, which through her sacraments mediates the grace of God. This is what Newman calls the “sacramental principle.” This principle is a precise theological idea based on the doctrine of the Incarnation where, in Jesus Christ, earth and heaven are united. This cannot be, therefore, an abstract or “spiritualized” concept, but involves the real lives of real people. Theology is distilled through pastoral practice, and so for Newman, his pastoral work was as important to his thought as his reading and study: “Close contact with his parishioners was, at length, to convince Newman that his Calvinist form of Evangelical theology did not square with his daily experience of God’s grace in the lives of ordinary folk, who were neither wholly regenerate nor reprobate.”

If the Incarnation is at the center of Christian revelation, there must be some kind of continuation of that mystery through time and space.
of her precepts, in the Majesty of her Hierarchy, in the beauty of her Ritual, in the dazzling lustre of her Saints, in the consistent march of her policy, and in the manifold richness of her long history—in all of these we recognize the Hand of the God of order, luminously, illustriously displayed.\(^{12}\)

The occasion on which Newman delivered this sermon is also noteworthy: the first diocesan synod held in Birmingham since the suppression of the Catholic Church in England three hundred years earlier. In this historic gathering of the local Church around its bishop, the preacher saw the clearest manifestation of what he called the Sacramentum unitatis, “…[W]hen all ranks and orders of the elect household are brought together from all parts into one place, under the invocation of One Spirit, in the form of a visible Hierarchy, and as an image of the whole Catholic Church...”\(^{13}\) With the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, Catholics in England could once again live in the full sacramental reality of the Church. No longer were they individuals or groups served by mission priests or vicars apostolic, they were a visible expression of the local Church gathered around her bishop.

This vision of realized communion has special meaning for us today. As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the publication of Anglicanorum coetibus, we invoke the jubilee grace of the Holy Spirit. I believe there is an analogy between the historical circumstances in England that followed the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy and the bold provision of Pope Benedict XVI in our founding Apostolic Constitution. Just as Newman rejoiced that English Catholics were finally able to live out fully the ecclesiology of the Catholic faith, so too in the creation of the Ordinariate: communities of former Anglicans may be received into a particular Church of their own.

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Like all the Sacraments, Confirmation was instituted by Christ. Even in the first days of the Church’s life, the Apostles imposed their hands on the newly baptized in order that they receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:14-17; Hebrews 6:2). Initially, Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated together and by the bishop. The large number of converts that followed the legalization of Christianity, however, made it nearly impossible for the bishop to travel from parish to parish to baptize. Often, there was a period of time between Baptism and a celebration at which the bishop would continue the apostolic gesture of laying on hands in Confirmation and give the newly confirmed first Eucharist. As this practice developed in the Western Church, the role of the bishop as the ordinary minister of Confirmation was emphasized as a sign of the visible communion of the confirmed Christian with the local and universal Church.

Theologically, however, the temporal separation of Baptism and Confirmation has created some problems, at least in terms of our popular understanding of the Sacrament. The celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at different times makes it harder to see the intimate connection and unity between Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. As this practice developed in the Western Church, the role of the bishop as the ordinary minister of Confirmation was emphasized as a sign of the visible communion of the confirmed Christian with the local and universal Church.

Confirmation is often unappreciated in its richness or worse yet, is downplayed as a “coming of age ritual” in the Church. Nevertheless, from Apostolic times, the Church has always insisted that Baptism and the personal gift of the Holy Spirit are inseparable though distinct (cf. Acts of the Apostles, 2:38; 10:44-48; 19:5-9), and that this initiation into Christ is completed in the reception of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Here is where Newman’s rich theology of the Holy Spirit can be our guide: he examined how the Holy Spirit makes the whole “event” of Christ Jesus—from the Incarnation through the Atonement—present, real, and effectual to and in us. The Holy Spirit, poured out on the Church and the world at Pentecost, continues the mission of the Son in every age by incorporating new members into Christ’s visible and ecclesial body. The Spirit causes the growth of Christ’s body; he draws human beings into intimate relationship with the Risen Lord, that we might know him and share his very life and communion with the Father. For the Christian, Confirmation is Pentecost: the personal gift of the Holy Spirit to the one washed in the saving waters of Baptism and grafted onto the body of Christ’s Church! The Spirit himself works an interior conformity to Christ, or more briefly, the Spirit makes Christ present.

The intimate union with Christ is at the very heart of the Sacrament of Confirmation as well. Each Sacrament has this Christological dimension, because the Spirit’s work makes Christ present and thereby continues the redemptive mission of the Lord Jesus. This work is perhaps more immediately perceptible in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, since at Mass we know that the Spirit called down upon the simple gifts of bread and wine consumes that offering and transforms our simple gifts into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. In the Rite, just after examining the candidates for Confirmation about their faith and their willingness to live the Christian life, the Bishop invites the whole assembly to stand and pray for those to be confirmed, saying:

Dearly beloved, by Holy Baptism, God our Father gave these his adopted sons and daughters new birth to eternal life. Let us therefore pray him to pour out upon them the Holy Spirit, to strengthen them in their faith, and to anoint them that they may be more like Christ the Son of God: that they may continue his forever, and daily increase in the Holy Spirit, more and more, until they come unto God’s everlasting kingdom.

15 • Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1287-1289.
16 • Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1322.
PART IV

THE CELEBRATION of the Sacraments of Initiation

IN THE ORDINARIATE OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER

Dearly beloved, forasmuch as you have brought this child to be baptized into the family of Christ’s Church...you must remember that it is your part and duty to see that he/she be taught what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he/she has here been made by you, and be instructed in all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health...Take care that he/she be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him; so that he/she might be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and may come to receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and go forth into the world to serve God faithfully in the fellowship of his holy Catholic Church.

17 • Divine Worship: The Order of Holy Baptism, The Duties.
The Ordinariate’s baptismal liturgy sets forth clearly and frankly the responsibility shared by parents, godparents, and the whole community for the Christian education of children. These Duties, solemnly proclaimed by the Priest or Deacon, give concrete scope and measure to Christian initiation. It is the Holy Spirit, incorporating the person into Christ through Baptism, sealing the soul with the image of Christ in Confirmation, who further configures the soul to Christ’s self-offering in the Holy Eucharist so as to share intimate communion with the Father. It is both the desire and vocation of parents to initiate their children into this life of grace so that they might live forever in the blessedness of heaven. The Church’s ministers and the whole family of the faithful stand ready therefore to assist parents in this noble duty.

As we consider the manner in which the religious education of children is frequently approached in Catholic parishes, we must acknowledge that it is commonplace to align the reception of the Sacraments with the child’s academic progression. First Confession and First Communion are often given in second grade. Confirmation is often conferred in eighth grade or in another year of high school. Further, sacramental preparation is often approached as a classroom experience or a series of prerequisites to be fulfilled. The unfortunate though unintended consequence of this mechanistic approach to the life of grace that often does not adequately favor the integral involvement of parents in the religious education of their children.

At the annual Clergy Assembly, the Priests and Deacons of the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter expressed their clear desire that this “automatic” approach should not take hold in our missionary Diocese. In this discussion, we took the unique opportunity to consider how we should prepare our children and teens for First Confession, First Eucharist, and Confirmation. The clergy also made known the importance of focusing on the grace given in the Sacrament and the necessary consideration of the child’s disposition to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Because so many of our parochial communities are new and are developing the fundamental structures that guide their ecclesial life, several points emerged out of that consultation:

• As seen in the Duties, the Anglican liturgical tradition, understands the essential and integral connection between the Sacraments of Initiation. In Confirmation, a child is “strengthened by the Holy Spirit” so that he or she “may come to receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ”;
• The practice of many of our Parochial Communities prior to coming into Full Communion favored the reception of Confirmation at a younger age, and typically together with Holy Eucharist;
• Our patrimony gives priority to the domestic Church, with serious regard for the proper role of parents as the primary educators of their children;
• Sacramental preparation cannot be totally out-sourced to youth ministry programs, but thrives when it takes place within the context of ongoing and age-appropriate catechesis.

Rather than aligning and measuring one’s readiness for the reception of a Sacrament to a particular age or grade level, Ordinariate parishes and parochial communities will adopt a more organic and flexible Readiness Model. Parents and catechists are given concrete markers to help discern, with their child, when he or she might be ready to begin preparation for the reception of a Sacrament. The Church’s Code of Canon Law\(^{18}\) enunciates four basic requirements for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. These are easily and equally applicable to the child’s reception of Confession and Eucharist as well:

• The person must have reached the age of reason (age 7);
• Must be instructed in a manner suitable to him/her;
• Must be properly disposed to receive the Sacrament;
• Must be able to renew the promises made in Baptism.

It is noteworthy that questions about the precise age of Confirmation are secondary. Rather, emphasis is on the ability of the child to receive suitable and age-appropriate instruction in faith and doctrine, his or her grasp of the connection between the Sacraments of Initiation, as well as his or her capacity to express the faith as an interior possession. The Readiness Model for catechesis and sacramental initiation is concerned with two fundamental things: First, who is responsible for determining a child’s readiness to receive the Sacraments? Second, what are the criteria that indicate the child’s readiness to receive the Sacraments?

18 • Code of Canon Law, Canon 889 §2, Canon 890.
Who determines a child’s readiness to receive the Sacraments?

When it comes to determining a child’s readiness to receive a free gift of sacramental grace, there are three parties in the conversation who together determine readiness: the child, who, as an evangelizing force within the family, asks for grace and has a fundamental right to receive the Sacraments; the parents, who as primary educators of their children have a definitive voice in the content and format of the religious instruction of their children; and the Pastor, who verifies that the Catholic faith is indeed handed on in its integrity.

It is worth repeating, therefore, that parents are the first educators in the faith for their children, and that this indispensable role must be respected and supported.

What are the criteria that indicate readiness to receive the Sacraments?

These criteria arise out of the Church’s own life and maternal wisdom. The Church accompanies the Baptized throughout life, equipping her children for mature discipleship and missionary engagement. Programs for sacramental preparation should be seen in that context; they are not requisite classes, but moments of particular intensity in the ongoing evangelization and formation of young people into mature Christians. First and foremost, then, preparation for the Sacraments begins with the regular practice of worship, faith, and active charity by the family. The very necessary minimum for prayer and moral effort for all the faithful is defined as the Precepts10 of the Church:

- Attend Mass on Sundays & Holy Days of Obligation and rest from servile labor;
- Confess one’s sins in the Sacrament of Confession at least once a year;
- Receive the Eucharist at least once a year during Easter time;
- Observe the days of fasting and abstinence as defined by the Church;
- Help to provide for the needs of the Church through stewardship.

Preparation for the Sacraments takes place within the context of ongoing, family-centered faith formation, which must continue beyond the reception of the Sacraments. This lifelong formation takes shape in the context of each particular Parish or Parochial Community. Initiatives should be developed to address the needs and circumstances of that particular community. Some examples of these types of initiatives are:

- Introductory catechesis for preschool-aged children (e.g., Catechesis of the Good Shepherd);
- Family Faith Formation for parents and their elementary and middle-school-aged children;
- Youth-centered initiatives for teens;
- Adult education classes, lectures, and programs;
- Bible Studies and/or small faith sharing groups.

When a child is ready to receive one of the Sacraments, he or she may then begin the appropriate preparation designed especially for that Sacrament. Sacramental preparation, always under the supervision and the guidance of the Pastor, should provide specific doctrinal content to guide a child’s understanding of the grace to be received. As these initiatives mature, Ordinariate Priests and Deacons will be asked to evaluate them.

19 • Pope St. Paul VI spoke eloquently about how children have a role evangelizing their families: “The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part” (Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi, n. 71). Pope St. John Paul II, quoting Pope Paul, makes the same point in Familiaris consortio, n. 52.

20 • Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2041-2043.
Religious Education in Home-Schooling Families

Parents who wish to home school their children for sacramental catechesis must provide the Pastor or his religious education director with the curriculum being used. Similarly, parishes are to develop a list of resources for home-schooling families and have catechists available to assist parents when needed. Before receiving a Sacrament, one or more meetings with the Pastor or his delegate will be scheduled to ensure the child is sufficiently catechized and properly disposed to receiving that Sacrament.

The Age of Receiving the Sacraments

In addition to noting the requirements for admission to the Sacrament of Confirmation, as cited above, Canon Law goes on to state that this Sacrament “is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion.” Even in her law, the Church envisions the conferral of Confirmation as a part of the normal process of a young child’s catechetical instruction and sacramental initiation. And yet, the majority of Dioceses in North America delay Confirmation into one’s teenage years. While this is usually done out of a pastoral concern to provide a more robust period of instruction and maturity of faith, there seems to be a disconnect between the presumption in law towards receiving Confirmation at a younger age and the common practice of delaying the Sacrament.

In 1999, a bishop petitioned the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the Holy See’s support of his diocesan policy, which delayed Confirmation until age 16. The Congregation responded contrary to his request and in favor of allowing a child to receive Confirmation at the time of First Holy Communion. The Congregation’s response was deemed important enough that it was published in its official documentation:

The Congregation considers it useful to point out that it is the role of the parents as the primary educators of their children and then of the Sacred Pastors to see that candidates for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation are properly instructed to receive the Sacrament and come to it at the opportune time (cf. can. 890). Consequently, when a member of the faithful wishes to receive this Sacrament, even though not satisfying one or more elements of the local legislation (e.g., being younger than the designated age for administration of the Sacrament), those elements must give way to the fundamental right of the faithful to receive the Sacraments. Indeed, the longer the conferral of the Sacrament is delayed after the age of reason, the greater will be the number of candidates who are prepared for its reception but are deprived of its grace for a considerable period of time.

21 • Code of Canon Law, Canon 891.
22 • See Joshua Madden, "Circa Aetatem Discretionis: A Proposal in favor of Restored Order Confirmation" in Antiphon, Vol. 21, no. 3 (2017), 228-251, especially 243-244.
PART V

Mary, Lady of Pentecost and Star of the New Evangelization,

PRAY FOR US!

At the center of the account of Pentecost stands the Blessed Virgin Mary. When the time came for the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples kept vigil and devoted themselves to prayer "together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:13-15). But of course she was present in the Upper Room, as her whole life was charged with the power of the Spirit! In her great and maternal care for us, Mary urged the Lord’s first miracle at Cana, telling those gathered for the wedding and also telling us, “do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5). She faithfully accompanied her Son’s earthly mission, even when that mission would lead her to witness firsthand the horror of Calvary. In receiving St. John into her motherly care at her crucified Son’s command, she enfolds in her mantle every disciple beloved by the Lord.
Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all have referred to Mary as the Star of the New Evangelization. Her fidelity and docility to the prompting of the Holy Spirit point out the way to a new flourishing for the Church and for our Ordinariate—a new Pentecost—in which the Spirit-filled proclamation of the Gospel calls new people into the adventure of discipleship and the joy of Catholic communion. In this, Mary is not only our model but also our powerful intercessor and guide. With confidence, then, we call upon her aid, using the words of our Holy Father:

Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own “yes” to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus, Filled with Christ’s presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist, making him exult in the womb of his mother. Brimming over with joy, you sang of the great things done by God. Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding faith, you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection, and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit so that the evangelizing Church might be born. Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.

Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God’s kingdom.

Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones, pray for us.

A M E N . A L L E L U I A !

24 • Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium, 288.