



# **“ Be Sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Gift of God ”**

**PASTORAL LETTER  
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OF EDMUNDSTON  
FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST  
MAY 27, 2007**

**My Dear People,**

**On the occasion of my fourteenth Pentecost Sunday pastoral letter, a song by Robert Vidal fills my heart like a prayer:**

***Come, Holy Spirit, light your Church with your fire  
Come, Holy Spirit, to invade the whole world!***

***Pour into our hearts your enthusiasm and your joy  
And make us avenues leading to the Lord.***

***Pour into our hearts your kindness, your wisdom  
And make us all children of the light.***

***Pour into our hearts youthfulness and faith  
And make us a springtime for your People.***

***Pour into our hearts prayer and peace  
And make us a leaven of unity.***

### **Countless Acts of Faith**

**It is always a privilege for me to celebrate the great sacrament of Confirmation. Thanks to God, I have already confirmed close to 8,000 children of the diocese of Edmundston, in the last thirteen years.**

**As I celebrate this beautiful sacrament I must make numerous acts of faith, because it is in faith only that we can grasp what is experienced in the Church and the world, through the sacrament of Confirmation.**

**A first act of faith is truly believing what I have become through my episcopal ordination: a successor of the apostles. The fact of presiding a sacrament such as Confirmation unites me not only to my brother bishops but also to the apostles themselves who, through the laying-on of hands, passed on the Holy Spirit to all who wanted to become disciples of Jesus.**

**There is a second act of faith that I must make: to believe in the communion of saints. The sacrament of Confirmation unites us to all our brothers and sisters throughout the world, and the bishop is the bond to all the other Churches and the Pope in particular, but first and foremost with all the brothers and sisters in our diocese.**

**I must also make a third act of faith: to believe that the Holy Spirit is as present, as powerful, as life-giving as he was on the day of Pentecost. It is always the same flame, the same rushing wind, the same outpouring in the Church.**

**And my fourth act of faith is to believe that the future confirmed are ready to welcome the Holy Spirit deep within themselves, just like the first disciples in Jerusalem and millions and millions of Christians throughout the world, through the centuries. The future confirmed, parents and sponsors, catechists and pastors, and the whole Christian community all want to welcome the Holy Spirit.**

**With the whole Church let us pray the Lord to perfect what he has already begun in the hearts of the baptised who are preparing to receive the second sacrament of Christian initiation: *“Lord, we are here to celebrate the wonders of your Spirit in us. Make that, thanks to him, we may always better know you, love you, and love our brothers and sisters.”***

## **1. What is Pentecost?**

**The word “Pentecost” means that the feast celebrated on that day takes place “fifty days” after Easter Sunday. The feast started off as an agrarian celebration, the “Feast of Harvests,” a day of joy and thanksgiving. The first books of the Bible, especially Exodus and Leviticus, point out that Pentecost was then the day when the first-fruits of the earth, the first sheaves of wheat, were offered. This feast usually took place seven weeks after the Passover. However, the feast was quickly given a new meaning, the commemoration of the Covenant of Sinai, fifty days after the Hebrews came out of Egypt. Ancient manuscripts, especially those of Qumran and the writings of the rabbis stress this feast which was celebrated by all the Jews, along with the Passover and the Feast of Tents. Along with these two feasts, Pentecost was one of the three celebrations of the people of God. The people wanted to remember from age to age God’s manifestation to them, the ‘theophany’ where God gave His people the gift of the ten commandments of the Covenant.**

**In Saint Luke’s account of the Christian Pentecost, we also find, there, signs of this “theophany” of God, especially wind and fire. In sending the Holy Spirit on the first community, “fifty” days after Christ’s great Paschal Event, a totally new meaning was given to this feast. It is the accomplishment of the promise Jesus made to his disciples when he was about to leave this earth. “Within a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.” It was also the fulfilment of what the Prophets – especially Ezekiel and Joel – had announced to the people of God, that in the endtime the Holy Spirit would be poured out on everyone.**

Word images are not lacking to describe the day of Pentecost: Outpouring of the Spirit, Crowning of Christ's Passover, Gathering of the Messianic community, Community open to all the nations, Inauguration of the Mission, Mystery of salvation. All these words try to describe the Great Event that happened at the heart of humanity nearly two thousand years ago. In different ways, it is this same coming of the Holy spirit that happens every time we celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation.

## 2. The Sacrament of Confirmation

*"The way the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred, from the very beginning has given rise, in the Church, to different rites. In the East as in the West, they underwent varied changes while always preserving the same meaning: to communicate the Holy Spirit. In several Eastern rites, it seems that from Antiquity there prevailed the rite of chrismation, without being all that separate from baptism. This rite is still in use today in most of the Eastern Churches. In the West, there are very ancient reports relative to this part of Christian initiation in which the sacrament of Confirmation was clearly seen. In fact, after the baptismal bath and before the eucharistic banquet, several ritual gestures were indicated: anointing, laying on of the hand, and signing."* These words of Pope Paul VI are in his Apostolic Constitution of August 15, 1971, in response to the Fathers of Vatican Council II. Aware as they were of their pastoral charge, the Fathers had carefully studied the sacraments of Christian initiation and had decided to revise their rites to better adapt them to the mentality of their faithful.

Paul VI noted that throughout the centuries questions and doubts were raised on what belongs with certainty to the essence of the sacrament of Confirmation, especially the importance of chrismation and the laying on of the hand. By his supreme apostolic authority, the Pope decreed and established that in the Latin Church the following would henceforth be followed: *"The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: 'Accipe Signaculum Doni Spiritus Sancti'."* The official translation recognised by the Holy See is: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

## 3. The Gifts of the Spirit

I address myself especially to each of the confirmed so that a great feeling of thanksgiving arise in their hearts for the coming of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and so that each of them may begin to unwrap the beautiful gifts that the Holy Spirit is preparing to give them: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and knowledge, a spirit of filial love, a spirit of strength, of worship and praise.

**These are most excellent gifts, that we shall never cease fathoming their beauty and grandeur, but which we have to appreciate today.**

**I know that at the Confirmation preparation, those to be confirmed had the opportunity to reflect on these gifts of the Holy Spirit – their letters to me are there as proof – that is why I say to them: Do not stop considering the gifts you are about to receive in the sacrament of Confirmation. These gifts will help you at all times and everywhere, in the most exciting moments as in the more difficult ones in your lives, in happiness and sadness, as much in freedom as in moments of difficulty and rejection.**

**Who can describe the beauty and richness of the gift of wisdom?**

**It is the gift that makes us recognise the presence of God in our lives.**

**Who can describe the beauty and richness of the gift of understanding?**

**It is the gift that enables us to understand the Word of God and apply in our lives.**

**Who can describe the beauty and richness of the gift of counsel?**

**It is the gift that allows us to choose what we must do to live according to the Gospel.**

**Who can describe the richness and beauty of the gift of knowledge?**

**It is the gift that makes us understand the true meaning of life and that helps us to answer the main questions of our existence.**

**Who can describe the beauty and richness of the gifts of filial love, strength, worship, and praise? What beautiful gifts we have to unwrap, throughout our lives! It would be good to start unwrapping today and to give thanks for these wonders.**

#### **4. The “Fruits” of the Spirit**

**Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit gives us wonderful gifts. These are mentioned throughout the New Testament. Saint Paul mentions several by name: joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, and justice.**

**These “fruits” are vital signs: to see whether we are in good health we must check our blood pressure and heart rate. These are a good indication of our state of health. In the same way, to know whether we correspond really with the gifts of the Holy Spirit which we have received, all we need to do is to check whether there is in us any joy, justice, and peace in our lives.**

***One who loves and respect one’s neighbour bears good fruits of the Spirit.  
One who has kind and loving words for others, and who spends  
his/her time speaking well of others, bears good fruits.***

*One who always shows a happy face, who is calm and relaxed is a witness to the joy of the Spirit in him/her.*

*One who sows love, hope, and faith wherever he/she passes, responds to the Holy Spirit's desire for peace.*

*One who prays, forgives, and loves produces fruits of fidelity which the Holy Spirit asks for.*

*One who shows acts of kindness and goodwill to others corresponds to the wishes of the Holy Spirit.*

*One who exercises patience day after day corresponds to the wishes of the Holy Spirit who wants us to be patient, kind, and loving.*

Confirmation produces effects in daily life, it affects each of our days. May we always produce beautiful and good fruits! A very simple prayer reminds me of these beautiful gifts of the Spirit:

*"We pray you, Lord, to sustain in us  
the spirit of clarity to stimulate us in the search of truth,  
the spirit of discernment to commit us to the decisions of the Gospel,  
the spirit of strength to inspire our courage, at narrow gates,  
the spirit of counsel that hastens us to the aid of our troubled neighbour,  
the spirit of prayer that draws us closer to you,  
the spirit of expectation and desire that keeps our faith and hope alert,  
the spirit of love, that brightens our face turned to heaven and to our brothers  
and sisters of the world."*

## **5. But Then, Who Is the Holy Spirit?**

Scripture tells us that on Easter evening, even though the disciples had locked the doors to the place where they were for fear of the Jews, *Jesus came and stood before them. "Peace be with you," he said. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. At the sight of the Lord the disciples rejoiced. Then he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound."*

I would like to speak very simply to you, today, about the Holy Spirit; I would like to present him to you and ask you to welcome him once again deep in your hearts. It is the Holy Spirit who fills heaven and earth with his grandeur, his beauty, and all of the wonders of God. God sends forth His Spirit, and everything is created. The Holy Spirit inhabits each one of us from the time of our baptism. He lives in us, though we know very little about him because we do not always take the time to acknowledge his presence in the silence of our hearts. It is the Holy Spirit that you have perhaps learned to recognise as you prepared for Confirmation, as the one whom Jesus promised to send us. The Holy Spirit is the one who, like the wind,

blows where he wants, to bring God's grace and peace to all who sincerely seek him in the truth. The Holy Spirit is the one who, like the fresh breeze, renews our strength when we are beaten down with cares, and who rekindles our faith when we doubt. The Holy Spirit is the one who stirs up the waters of our baptism and shakes up our lives to prompt us to go to the poor, the sick, and the marginalised of society. The Holy Spirit allows us to bear in ourselves a world that is more beautiful than the one we inhabit. It is the Holy Spirit who came upon the Virgin Mary and made Jesus our Saviour. The Holy Spirit is the one who came to the Apostles as tongues of fire, and who enabled them to proclaim in every language the wonders of God. The Holy Spirit was the strength of the martyrs and of all the saints. The Holy Spirit presides over the beginnings of the Church, and is at the beginnings of all our Christian communities. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the strength to love, to give, to forgive, and to pray. The Holy Spirit is God giving us life, he is the "Giver of life." The Holy Spirit radiates the Father's love for all of us, in us and around us. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us produce the most beautiful fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and fidelity. The Holy Spirit is God coming to help us be friends to Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to send us as protector and defender. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the seven most beautiful gifts.

## **6. Inspired Texts**

The Bible is composed of 72 books written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. From one end of the Bible to the other, we read about the working of the Spirit, and about how humankind reacted to this action. I would just like to refer to three passages.

The first text is drawn from the first chapter of the first book of the Bible. It tells us how God created man and woman: *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. God created man in His image, in the divine image He created them; male and female He created them."* He gave them the breath of life, the Spirit, and they were created. God saw everything He had done, and it was good. He marvelled at the sight of man and woman whom He had created, and he still marvels today. He finds us wonderful, we are precious in His eyes, and we mean very much to Him.

I hesitated before giving you the second passage: I hope that you are not too afraid of the dead! The passage is taken from the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 37. The title of the passage is "Vision of the Dry Bones," which is a hope-filled text. I quote this passage to show you that there are no situations in the world that cannot be changed; no family situation, a Church situation, no condition in the world. The Lord can always give life. Ezekiel writes: *"The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he led me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me in the centre of the plain, which*

*was now filled with bones. He made me walk among them in every direction so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain. How dry they were! He asked me; son of man, can these bones come to life? "Lord God," I answered, "you alone know that." Then he said to me: Prophecy over these bones, and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life. I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life and know that I am the Lord. I prophesied as I had been told, and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise, it was the rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. I saw the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and the skin cover them, but there was no spirit in them. Then he said to me: Prophecy to the spirit, prophecy, son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus says the Lord God: From the four winds, come, O spirit, and breathe into these slain that they may come to life. I prophesied as he told me, and the spirit came into them; they came alive and stood upright, a vast army. Then he said to me: Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They have been saying, Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off. Therefore, prophecy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the Lord. I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord."* This is a scripture passage that is full of life, and full of hope. The Lord can transform our deaths into wonderful life; He can bring the sun to our darkest days. In the most difficult moments of our lives, in the darkest moments in the life of the Church or society, the Lord can always bring life, and the Spirit.

The third passage is from the Acts of the Apostles, and it refers to Jesus' promise. *"You will receive power, when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth."* This was the same Holy Spirit who was given to us at baptism, and given once again at Confirmation, the bishop confirms this extraordinary presence of the Spirit in the baptised; he confirms the Spirit's constant action in our lives.

## **7. The Blessings of the Spirit**

In the book titled *Je fais route avec toi* [I Journey with You] we have a wonderful description of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a brief but dynamic description:

*"I welcome the gift of wisdom, to help me give more room to the Lord, in my life.*



***I welcome the gift of intelligence, to help me understand the Word of God as a guiding light in my life.***

***I welcome the gift of wisdom, so as to live and love as Jesus did, despite everything.***

***I welcome the gift of counsel, to be able to make good decisions that help me live as a true Christian.***

***I welcome the gift of knowledge so as to find, in the light of the Gospels, answers to life's important questions.***

***I welcome the gift of filial love so as to live as a real son, a real daughter of God, a real brother, a real sister to all humans.***

***I welcome the gift of worship and praise in order to pray the Lord, to worship Him and give Him thanks."***

## **8. At the Heart of Daily Life**

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not meant just for special occasions, they are also meant to affect our day-to-day life.

The gift of wisdom is not meant only when making great decisions; it is meant for every day of our lives. Wisdom makes us discover or rediscover God's presence in our lives, our day-to-day lives. It is today that God is with us: I ought to repeat this every day. God is present in all of life's moments, and He never fails me. Let us not be afraid to take time for God, to spend at least one hour a week to thank Him for His presence, and to tell Him how this presence of His is important to us.

The gift of intelligence is not only for times of study: it is for knowing God better and better, and for knowing His Word. It would be very important to take a few minutes a week to read the Word of God and learn about His great plan of love for each one of us.

The gift of counsel is not only for the great moments of our lives. It is given to us to help us constantly adjust our wills to the will of God, and to always take the best path, for our happiness and that of others.

The gift of courage is not only for times of serious trials, like sickness and death. We all need courage, every day. You all know what happened to Christopher Reeves of Superman fame. After falling from a horse it took him daily courage, one day at a time, 300% of courage!

The gift of knowledge is not only for use in school: It is throughout our lives that we must learn and deepen our understanding of the true meaning of life, love, and death. It is the gift that helps us discern the will of God and carry it out day by day.

The gift of filial love and of fraternal love is not only meant for the day of marriage. It is every day that we must see ourselves as children of God, as brothers and sisters to each other: we belong to the same family, and it is love that binds us to one another.

The gift of worship is not for use only for the great times of the year, but for every day, as it is given to help us worship God, pray to Him, and thank Him, very simply, with the heart of a child.

You see, the gifts of the Spirit follow us each day of our lives. I so much want to tell you over and over again about this wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

## 9. Important Promises

One rite that often goes unnoticed or does not get sufficient attention from us is the renewal of our baptismal promises and the solemn profession of faith. Is this last a simple promise, or a commitment? I personally consider it a commitment by the future confirmed, to live as friends of Jesus, “even if it’s hard.”

Years ago there was a very popular French hymn called *J’engageai ma promesse au baptême* [“I Pledged My Word at Baptism”]. We used to sing it at our Profession of Faith or at the annual parish mission: “I pledged my word at baptism, but it was others who swore the oath in my name. Today I answer for myself: I pledge myself freely, today.” In the letters that the future confirmed wrote to me, they say that it is their turn to freely commit themselves to the Lord, to live the Lord’s “commandment.” And the Lord’s ever-new commandment is always the same: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your spirit, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.*” In its great simplicity, this twofold commandment requires the strength of the Spirit, so as to live it fully throughout the year.

## 10. Some Concerns

One of my major concerns today, and one of my greatest fears is to think and even realise that tomorrow or the day after, the newly-confirmed will have quickly forgotten this great event that is Confirmation. The letters they have written are

beautiful, but will they remember them in a year, a month, or even next Sunday? Several tell me that they want their love to be contagious, that they want to love God throughout their lives, that they are committing themselves to the Church “for good...” This is my concern: I am afraid that they quickly forget this as early as next week. In many places we no longer see our young people in church until the time of their school graduation, or on their wedding day. Can I, as bishop, expose the sacrament of Confirmation to such a void?... This is the question I have, and that several pastors, catechists, and parents themselves ask... I tell these young people persistently: “My dear friends, never forget what you are celebrating today: the presence of the Holy Spirit at the heart of your lives.”

I must have as much faith regarding each sacrament as I have regarding the Word of God. We read in Isaiah 55: *“For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I have sent it.”* As Jesus says in his parables on the Kingdom of God, the seed in the earth continues to develop and grow day and night, and one day it shall be as a tree planted in the middle of our ground.

## **11. Testimonies of the Future Confirmed**

Every year I receive over 600 letters from young people who want Confirmation. I read all of them and I consider them as true “professions of faith” in the Holy Spirit. They are usually filled with gratitude to their parents for getting them baptised at birth. They also mention the fruitful Confirmation preparation they have received. The following are excerpts from these letters.

### **Open to the Holy Spirit**

**To be confirmed is to choose to live the grand project of Jesus, by doing such things as saying “I love you,” by being able to apologise, by forgiving, by helping those who have problems, by hugging others, etc. It is, especially, being open and available to the Holy Spirit.**

**– Kim**

### **The Path of Jesus**

**I want to continue following the path of Jesus, to bring his light to shine, and to continue growing in the new life I am about to receive. I also believe that being confirmed means that I must continue what I have already started, that is, loving others, sharing, forgiving, growing in God, in the Church.**

**– Pierre-Luc**

### **A New Heart**

**I want to be confirmed to get a new heart. It is important for Christians to follow Jesus. It is a sign of friendship, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and generosity.**

**– Josianne**

### **Strength and Light**

**I want to be confirmed because I want to receive Jesus in my heart. I need his Spirit to help me make good decisions in life. His light will guide me throughout life. His strength will help me face many obstacles.**

**– Jessy**

### **With the Heart of Jesus**

**When I receive the Holy Spirit I shall see life with the eyes of Jesus. Here are some of the values of Jesus that we call the fruits of the Spirit: piety, love, courage, respect, friendship, sharing, and forgiveness. I want the Holy Spirit to guide me in using them well.**

**– Catherine**

### **Joy in the World**

**For several months now I have been preparing my Confirmation with my parents and my friends, and our catechist. Together we have prayed and reflected, and I have learned that to be confirmed is to receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts to help us in bringing peace, love and joy to the whole world. This is the mission to be accomplished, which Jesus gave us. I choose to walk with him, to be guided by him**

with his light and his strength. I promise to follow him and to open my heart to his actions. It is for all of these reasons that I want to be confirmed.

– Marie-Ève

### **Harvesting the Fruits of the Spirit**

I want to confirm the sacrament of Baptism that I received at birth, when I was little and my parents decided that they would raise me in the community of Jesus. I believe in the Holy Spirit, who gave me his gifts. I know that if I live my everyday life by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, living as a good Christian, I will harvest the fruits of the Spirit. I believe that being confirmed is an important decision, and I commit myself to pray with the community in the house of the Lord, where I shall learn to grow and be better.

– Jérémie

### **Sharing in the Father's Project**

To be confirmed is to receive from the Holy Spirit the light that shines on our path and the strength that sustains us in the trials of daily life. It is a sign that God invites me to be an active and responsible member of my community. The Holy Spirit I welcome today helps me take part in carrying out the Father's great project of life, and to help make the world a more just, fraternal, peaceful, happy, and loving place.

– Félix

### **Filled with His Power**

Being confirmed is receiving the Holy Spirit in my life. The Holy Spirit helps me better live all kinds of situations because, in my heart I shall be filled with his power. I will act with greater love, peace, and courage; it will be more pleasant to me and to those around me.

– Joanie

### **For the Rest of My Life**

It is important for me to be confirmed, because I want to marry. I would like to live my daily life in the practice of the gifts I received from the Holy Spirit, and by harvesting their fruit. I want to live the remainder of my life in the Christian way.

– Jessica

### **Growing in Love**

Jesus gives us his Spirit, we celebrate the Holy Spirit at the heart of our lives, the Spirit who helps our community grow in love. We welcome the Spirit to transform and solidify our Christian life, so that we may be his witnesses in the Church and the world.

– Gabrielle

### **Like Jesus**

**I want to be confirmed to receive the Spirit of Jesus in my heart, and to live in his love and in the faith. I want to be confirmed to receive the seven gifts of the Spirit so as to be able to live and love like Jesus, to put more love in my family, and to make more room for the Lord in my life.**

**– Joey**

## **Responsible for a Better World**

God tells me that I am always His beloved child. I grow in the new life I have received and I become a being “contagious” with God’s love. I am sent to bring the light of Jesus and make it shine. With the Church community, I become an active and responsible member, for a better and more fraternal world. The Holy Spirit I welcome helps me carry out the mission that Jesus has given us. I would say that this mission is to understand the Word of God in order to live it better, and to proclaim our attachment to Jesus Christ. It is to believe in and trust God the Father, in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, and in the Church, the great family of God’s children, living among the marvels of eternity. It is to accept the gift of the Spirit, and to let myself be marked by it. It is also to have a new meaning in life, to be united to Jesus and to the community of believers.

– Marie-Hélène

## **Unique Importance**

The Spirit of Confirmation is the Spirit of the Seven Gifts. He is given to us to help us grow in the Christian life. Each one of the gifts is uniquely important. It is thanks to the Spirit that I can carry always further my search for God, enlighten my life with the Word of God, choose to forgive rather than seek revenge, face the obstacles on my path, discover the meaning of death, live my daily life in a trusting and joyful relationship with God, and develop a taste for prayer. I want to become involved in the Church and the Christian community. It is important for me to continue proclaiming the Good News to the poor. I shall continue talking about Jesus Christ, in my daily life, by being “pushed” by the Holy Spirit.

– Andrew

## **Opening My Heart**

Being confirmed is accepting the gift of God that is the Holy Spirit. I understand better the words of Jesus and the role of the Holy Spirit in my life. I want to accept the gifts of the Spirit. I want to open my heart to the action of the Spirit, to bear the fruits of love, joy, peace, kindness, etc. Yes, the Holy Spirit can help me get involved in the Church, and help me continue to proclaim Jesus Christ.

– Gabriel-Ange

## **Performing Acts**

I want to get involved in the Church and the Christian community by doing acts of love, joy, and service. It is very important for me to continue proclaiming Jesus Christ, and I shall continue to talk about him when I am older. The Holy Spirit will help me by giving me strength and power, peace and love.

– Vanessa

## **Light of the World**

**I want to receive the sacrament of Confirmation because Jesus is the light of the world, and as I follow in the faith of my Church and respond to his love in my heart, I receive the light of life. “Lord, through your Holy Spirit, help me discover the world with the eyes of your love.”**

**– Guillaume**

## **12. Testimonies of Parents**

**Besides the letters from the future confirmed, for several years now I have been getting letters from some of the parents who bring their children to me for Confirmation, and support them in their decision to request it. It is wonderful to realise the esteem and love that parents have for their children. It is terrific to hear them say how much the preparation for Confirmation has helped them discover the riches of their own Confirmation, and better understand and appreciate the Holy Spirit.**

### **Continue the Journey**

**We are very happy and proud that our daughter has chosen from among all possible path, the path of God. We are filled with joy at the realisation that she has decided to pursue the journey we had begun with her at Baptism. As parents, let us try to give the best to our children, so that they be ready and prepared to confront all of life’s situations. We firmly believe that this is the best path to take.**

**– Rachel and Jean-Louis**

### **An Active and Responsible Member**

**In a few weeks we shall be having our child’s Confirmation. The qualities we appreciate in our daughter are the capacity to forgive those who hurt her, and she loves to help the sick or those who have problems doing certain things by themselves. We want our child to be confirmed so that she may be an active and responsible member of a more just and fraternal world, and that the Holy Spirit help her build up the house that Jesus has given us. In journeying with our child, we have better understood who the Spirit is, as well as his different gifts. We better understand his role in our lives, and how he acts in us.**

**– Renald and Guylaine**

### **Continuing His Journey**

**Our child is exceptional, he is very respectful, kind, and in tune with what happens around him. He is generous, and has a good sense of humour. He helps me a lot at home, he looks after his little 3-year-old sister while Mother studies. He does this besides other household chores. I want my child to be confirmed so that he may continue on his Christian journey. My son says his prayers every night, and prays for everyone. What impresses me even more is that he always does this on his**



knees. An act of humility, you might say. There is such wisdom, in this young man! I really enjoyed journeying with him, the sacramental preparation has taught me a lot about my religion, and I am grateful.

– Diane

### Discovering the Inspiration

My child will be confirmed, this year. It is one of life's great moments, to us, because my daughter will discover the inspiration of the Spirit, in this sacrament. She will also know about the seven gifts of the Spirit of God.

– Maria

### The Church's Great Adventure

The Lord has never stopped giving me signs of his love: my family, my husband, my children, my friends, his Bread of life, his forgiveness, and his Spirit. Today he wants to show me his friendship once again by giving my daughter the desire to be confirmed. She says that she wants to be part of the Church's great adventure, and it is for this reason that she wants to receive the Spirit in her heart. As a parent, I am very proud that she has decided this, and may the Lord bless her throughout her life.

– Chantal

### Child of God

For several weeks now I have been preparing my child for Confirmation. I show him the best I can what I have learned from the Catholic Church, and I think that he is proud of this. I pray for him every night because I love him with all my heart, he is my whole life. He is a terrific little man, warm, lovable, caring, and self-reliant. He is heading in the right direction, and I thank the Lord. I ask you to confirm my child because he is a child of God. He enjoys the sacramental preparation work: through this we better understand who is the Holy Spirit.

– Branda

### Spiritual Renewal

We would like our daughter to be confirmed. We see in her all the love she can bring in her daily life, helping others both at school and at home, even if it sometimes is inconvenient to her. She is an element of peace with her friends, even though there may be easily solved minor disagreements among them. We would like her to receive this sacrament, that she decide for herself to be part of God's great family, that she realise the benefit of her spiritual renewal, to feel that God is always present in both good and difficult times. She will also be able to have awareness that the fruits of the Holy Spirit that she has can help her in her daily life, making her life and that of those around her better, even if it is only through small acts of kindness.

– Lise and Gilles

### **A True Witness of Christ**

**I want my child to be confirmed so that he will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help him grow in the faith, to help him live the Christian life fully, and become a true witness of Christ. The qualities I appreciate in my child are: love, faith, patience, kindness, and gentleness. As I worked with my child to prepare for the sacrament, I better understood who the Holy Spirit is, and I reaffirmed my own Confirmation. I realised that the Holy Spirit is always present in our daily lives. I shall continue helping my child to stay on the right path.**

– Lisa

### **A Model of Love**

**The time has come for our child to fly with his own wings, supported by the breeze of the Holy Spirit. I understand that through my baptismal commitment I must further my child's faith education. Even if he must decide for himself to accept the gifts of the Spirit, I know that I must continue to be a role model to him. I want my child to receive the sacrament of Confirmation so that he may also bear fruit and help us build up the Kingdom of love, and, in this way, that he experience the joy there is in serving God and in following the promises of Christ day after day.**

– Tina

### **To Better Know the Spirit**

**Our son shall receive Confirmation shortly. He is very happy about it, and overflows with love and kindness. We want our child to be confirmed because he has chosen to follow the catechetics programme and, with this, he asks to be confirmed. As I journeyed with our child in his faith journey and confirmation preparation and explained to him the best we could, I, too, better understood or realised what the catechetics programme was all about, and got to better know the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit plays a big role in our lives as individuals, and in the family unit.**

– Diane

### **Taking Another Step**

**I want to add my voice to that of my daughter who is asking you to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, this year. I personally support her request because she has been able to apply to her daily activities Jesus' acts of kindness. For her age, my child is very responsible, and she shows a maturity that is out of proportion with her age. Her sense of analysis and self-criticism makes her a person who challenges herself very much, and who grows day after day in her Christian faith and, generally, in her social and family values. She has a good understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and always finds ways of applying them in her relations with her friends, parents, and people she meets. I hope to be able to teach her through my example, my work, and my life to journey with the Lord Jesus. I hope**

that she will continue to talk to him in times of happiness as well as in times of sadness. Today she must take another step, renewing her baptismal promises freely and consciously. To this, I can vouch for her.

– Fabienne

### Being a Witness

We want to give our son a very nice gift by presenting him to you, in order to receive the gift of the Spirit. He has now reached the stage where he can renew by himself his baptismal commitment. With the help of his catechists and with our help, he understands what he is committing to, and he is ready to witness to the Good News. There is a lot of generosity and kindness, in him. He has a good sense of sharing, and we are convinced that the people who meet him will appreciate him. He is a remarkable young man, and we trust that he shall succeed in life according to his desires. As parents, we shall continue to guide him in love, hope, peace, and joy. For this, the presence of the Holy Spirit in his heart could strengthen this decision. We shall contribute to the faith promise he shall give you on the day of his Confirmation, by being an example to him as witnesses of Jesus. We love our son with all our heart, and this gift of Confirmation that he will receive will be very precious, since he shall then be guided by the Holy Spirit.

– Lisa and François

### 13. A Message to Our Young People

A few days before leaving for Rome, in May, 2006, I composed a song dedicated to our youth. It was sung for the first time by Mrs. Raymonde Bellefleur at the 2006 Foire Brayonne Mass in Edmundston.

#### *Young People of Ours*

##### *Refrain:*

*Young people of ours,  
Come with us  
To build a Church in your image,  
A Church filled with love,  
A Church full of life  
That urges us on together  
To ever greater heights.*

*Young people, Jesus Christ calls you  
To a new land.  
He gives you precious gifts*

*To help you serve.  
Use these talents  
With love and enthusiasm.*

*Young people, the Church calls you.  
Do not be afraid, she admires your beauty.  
Be really the salt of the earth,  
Bring joy to your brothers and sisters,  
As you break out in laughter.*

*Young people, the world calls you.  
Always be the spark  
To set the world ablaze.  
For the party to begin,  
Join the circle,  
And always be a blazing light.*

*Young people, the earth calls you  
To save the waters and the skies.  
Protect the environment  
With your heart and your hands.  
Save for times to come  
The beautiful shrine to be built.*

I want to tell the young people over and over again that they are in my thoughts. I am always happy to see them, either at Confirmation or graduation. At the tomb of Pope John Paul II I prayed for them in a very special way: you all know how the Pope was fond of young people. His trip to Toronto was a sign of this. Despite his age and failing health, he insisted on celebrating with us the 2002 World Youth Day. Pope Benedict XVI continues this ministry in his own way. He spoke to us of his unforgettable meeting with the young people at the Cologne gathering, in 2006.

#### **14. An Ageless Message**

Towards the end of the Bible, in the first letter of saint John, there is an ageless message, one that is still timely. I encourage you to read these few lines that are good for us and that stimulate us on our journey. Addressing the youth, the elderly apostle John speaks to them in affectionate terms: "Little children."

#### **A Desire for Communion**

**Saint John so much wanted us to be in communion with the risen Jesus that he gives us certain guidelines for achieving this: avoiding sin, keeping the commandments, especially that of charity, avoiding the world and its seductions, and keeping away from the antichrist. He so much wants us to live as children of God, that he writes: "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are. The reason the world does not recognise us is that it never recognized the Son. Dearly beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him keeps himself pure, as he is pure. Little ones, the man who acts in holiness is holy indeed, even as the Son is holy. When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Our love is brought to perfection in this, that we should have confidence on the day of judgement; for our relation to this world is just like his. Love has no room for fear; rather, perfect love casts out all fear. And since fear has to do with punishment, love is not yet perfect in the one who is afraid. The commandment we have from him is this: whoever loves God must also love his brother."**

## **15. Message of Love**

**This is the message of love that I want to give you today. Never doubt it: God loves you with an infinite and eternal love. I invite you to respond to this love as wholeheartedly as you can. Life may sometimes seem hard, to you, or even absurd. But do not be afraid: God loves you from everlasting to everlasting. He gave you life, and He maintains it. He invites you to join Him in creating a fraternal and peaceful world. Let me tell you again that you have a place in the Church. Baptised in Jesus, you are always called by God, you are sent to your brothers and sisters to give them the message of love. You have been confirmed, you received precious gifts: I urge you to make them bear fruit in your lives as you use them every day in your milieu: a smile, an act of kindness, work well done, positive interpersonal relations. I also invite you to pray for me, for the Church, and for all humankind. Pray especially for peace. May this peace be in your family, your school, and where you work. You yourselves be peacemakers. Be assured of my daily prayer for you so that we may remain in communion with one another. I wish you a lot of happiness, peace and joy all through the years. Young people of ours, I tell you once again that you are valuable in the eyes of Lord, and in the Church.**

**May the Virgin Mary who was always available to the Holy Spirit, and who prayed with the Apostles in the Upper Room, guide you on the road to her Son Jesus. I wholeheartedly pray the Lord to shower you with his most precious blessings, the gifts of his Spirit.**

+ François Thibodeau *gm*

**+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston**