



## Laying on of hands and anointing are signs of the Holy Spirit's presence.

### WE GATHER

✝ *Holy Spirit, we welcome you.*

In a classroom you often see students raising their hands. What might this action be a sign of? What are some other actions that we use as signs?

### WE BELIEVE

After Pentecost the apostles were strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit. They began to spread the message of God's Kingdom throughout the world. They gave witness to Jesus Christ by what they said and did. They baptized many believers.

The newly baptized received the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit when the apostles placed their hands on them. These early Church members understood the importance of the laying on of hands. This ancient action is a powerful sign of God's blessing. By the laying on of hands, authority and grace were given in God's name. By the apostles laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit came upon those who believed in Jesus Christ.

From the very beginning of the Church there was a connection between Baptism and this laying on of hands by the apostles. The laying on of hands was the beginning of the sacrament of Confirmation.

As the Church grew and spread, eventually an anointing was joined to the laying on of hands. The word *anoint* means to apply oil to someone as a sign that God has chosen that person for a special mission. Like the laying on of hands, anointing is an ancient practice. Anointing was an important part of Jewish life during Jesus' time.

The early Church continued anointing with oil as a sign of God's presence in the life of the person anointed. The anointing that took place with the laying on of hands was a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and of the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In time the anointing became the essential sign of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Chrism, oil blessed by a bishop, was used in this anointing. Today in the sacrament of Confirmation, the anointing with oil is done as the celebrant lays his hand on the head of the one being confirmed.

## As Catholics...

There are many symbols that remind us of the Holy Spirit. Two of them can be found in the Pentecost story: wind and fire. Each symbol helps us to understand the ways the Holy Spirit acts in our lives.

The word spirit comes from a Hebrew word that means "wind," "air," and "breath." The presence of the Holy Spirit is often symbolized as wind. Wind travels everywhere. It surrounds us. The Holy Spirit does the same.

The symbol of fire suggests warmth, energy, power, and change. Fire changes whatever it touches. So does the Holy Spirit. We are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Talk about other symbols or images of the Holy Spirit.

### WE RESPOND

🙌 With a partner talk about the different actions that are part of our worship. What do we do, or see others doing, to praise God? How are these actions signs that we believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Illustrate one of these actions.