

## **Marriage Preparation – Why Should We Be Confirmed before Marrying?**

Thank you for your excellent question.

As you know, Marriage is for Christians a vocation, a life calling in response to the gift of life God gives us and to Jesus' call to follow Him. Since this is God's perspective on our life, He offers us the means to be equipped to meet the challenge of our vocation, whatever it may be: to celibacy and priesthood as in my case or to Marriage in your case.

Jesus fully equips us for a life of faith in God the Father and of trust in Jesus and obedience to his commands, enabling us to follow Him, through the Sacraments of Initiation into the Mysteries of Christ and through our daily living the new life He offers us through those sacraments.

In Baptism, Jesus makes us able to endure the trials and sufferings of life as we try to follow Him and live a life of love of God and service to our neighbor. Baptism also strengthens us to accept to die to our selfish impulses in order to have room for love, to receive the love of others and to give love to others, especially those who do not appear to deserve our love; since that is the kind of love God gives us, a love so great we cannot ever deserve it.

In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit inspires us to think with the mind of Christ and to love with his Sacred Heart, by activating in us what are called the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As we pray daily and worship God and give Him thanks and praise every Sunday at Holy Mass, the Sacrifice of Jesus which He offers again and again each week, even each day; so that He can form us to become more like Him in all that we live, think, say, and do.

In Holy Eucharist, which we receive every time we receive Jesus in Holy Communion during the Holy Mass, Jesus brings us into communion with Him and with the Heavenly Father through the love and power of the Holy Spirit. Holy Communion puts us in communion in the heart of the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and also puts us at the same time in communion with the Church, which is the community of faith that Jesus is Himself bringing about constantly, and with the shepherds He gives us: our Holy Father the Pope and our Bishops and Priests.

We cannot have communion only with Jesus but not with his Church, because the Church is like a Bride to Jesus, for whom He has given his life out of love to free her - all the believers in communion with Him and with their bishops - so that she might, we might, be free to live the new life God offers us each day.

The first time we received Jesus was called our First Holy Communion, and Jesus expects us to attend and participate every Sunday in his Holy Sacrifice to give thanks and praise with Him to his Father and to entrust to the Father our life, our needs, our decisions, our loved ones, and every aspect of our lives during the coming week. At Mass we are giving public witness to our attachment and devotion to God and also keeping ourselves open to his will for us.

To sum up then, a Catholic is not a fully initiated Christian without having experienced all three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. It remains for your wife to be to say why she does not want to be fully initiated into the new life Jesus offers to those who have been baptized into his death and resurrection and have received the gift of faith in God.

Couples who enter into Marriage without being fully initiated into Christ are less equipped with the grace and power of love which God offers. The sacraments are not imposed because God respects our freedom and will only give us spiritual gifts if and when we truly want them and are willing to take the time and make the effort to prepare ourselves to become properly disposed to receive what it is that God is offering.

So, to answer your question, you can still both be married in the Church, providing neither of you has been married before, or if you have, that the Church now recognizes you as free from any bond relating to a previous marriage.

Your unconfirmed fiancé (e) will be somewhat handicapped from a spiritual point of view without Confirmation, and it is highly desirable that she (he) looks into it and accepts from God the gift of motivation to prepare (him) herself and then receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. I have prepared several engaged persons in this way for the Sacrament of Confirmation, both before and after they were to marry, in accord with their dispositions and availability in each case.

I hope this answers your question, and I will be glad to follow up with you and your fiancé (e) if that is your wish. God's peace be with you both and with your families.

**Fr. Gilles A. Surprenant, your Pastor**