

unto them as he touched them. [Thereby] he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 18:36–37; Moro. 2:1–3). The Doctrine and Covenants specifies: “And whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them” (D&C 33:15).

The ordinance of confirmation is usually performed at a baptismal service or fast and testimony meeting. One or more bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood lay their hands upon the head of the newly baptized person, and the one who is “voice,” calling the person by name, says words to this effect: “In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood, I confirm you a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and say unto you, ‘receive the Holy Ghost.’” Words of blessing follow as the Spirit of the Lord may dictate, invoking divine guidance, comfort, admonition, instruction, or promise. The initiates are often reminded that through this gift they will discern right from wrong and that the Spirit will be, as it were, a lamp to their feet.

The receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost may or may not be apparent immediately, although the *right* to receive this gift is conferred at confirmation. The admonition to receive the Holy Ghost is interpreted to include living in a receptive way for the enlightenment of the Spirit. Joseph Smith taught, “No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations. The Holy Ghost is a revelator” (*TPJS*, p. 328). One is admonished likewise to seek earnestly for spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1–11, 31; D&C 46:9–26) and the “fruits of the Spirit,” including love, joy, peace, and longsuffering (Gal. 5; Moro. 7:45–48).

The scriptures sometimes refer to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost as the “baptism of fire” (Matt. 3:11; 3 Ne. 19:13; Morm. 7:10). Confirmation begins that process. It is seen as a lifetime quest formally renewed each Sabbath in the partaking of the SACRAMENT, whose prayers end with the plea that those who have taken upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ “may always have his Spirit to be with them” (Moro. 4:3).

Once individuals have been confirmed as members of the Church and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they may retain this gift by maintaining a state of worthiness with corrections as needed, through an ongoing process of repentance and discipleship.



A girl is confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Philippines, 1986). Confirmation is a priesthood ordinance performed after baptism, inviting the person to receive the Holy Ghost. Courtesy Floyd Holdman.

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CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

While any member of the Church is free to object to military combat service because of conscience, simply holding membership in the Church in and of itself is not a justification. Church leaders have discouraged conscientious objection in every conflict of the twentieth century. Although it is opposed to war and recognizes that going to war is a very poor alternative means of resolving conflicts, the Church considers it the loyal duty of citizenship for members to answer the call of their various countries for military service.

At the same time, it recognizes the right of individual members to determine for themselves whether their deep, spiritual consciences will allow them to serve in combat or require them to request assignment to alternate service. The

Church will not support a member in that request until he or she has consulted with the appropriate bishop and stake president and has spiritual confirmation that the way decided upon by the member concerned is acceptable to the Lord.

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CONSECRATION

[*The following two articles deal with the LDS concept of consecration. Law of Consecration offers an overview of the origin and extended practice of the principles of consecration among Latter-day Saints. The article Consecration in Ohio and Missouri specifically addresses both LDS efforts to live such principles and the resulting economic impact on LDS communities that flourished in these states between 1832 and 1846.*]

LAW OF CONSECRATION

The law of consecration was introduced through revelations given to the Prophet Joseph SMITH. As early as 1829, he was directed by the Lord to "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" (D&C 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 14:6). Anciently, the ZION of ENOCH was made up of people who "were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). These features have characterized the Lord's people who have accepted and applied the fulness of the gospel in their lives, such as the people of the city of Enoch (Moses 7:17–18) and the Nephite golden era (4 Ne. 1:2–3, 15–17) and some of the early Christians (Acts 4:32–37). Latter-day Saints have also been given the law of consecration as an ideal and a challenge and promise for the future (D&C 42:32–39).

The level of dedication required to live the law of consecration has many ancient echoes. The Bible records acts of consecration expressly connected with instituting COVENANTS with God (e.g., Gen. 9:8–17; Num. 6). The willingness to sacrifice Isaac signified the complete dedication of Abraham to God's commands (Gen. 22:1–18). Exodus and Leviticus also disclose various sacrificial acts involving consecration to God, principally by AARON and his sons (cf. Ex. 40:12–16; Lev. 1–7). The New

Testament records that early Christians were called upon to set their hearts first on the KINGDOM OF GOD and to have "all things in common" (Acts 2, 4, 5).

After the risen Jesus established his Church in the Western Hemisphere about A.D. 34, the Book of Mormon people followed the practice of consecration for nearly 200 years. "The people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift" (4 Ne. 1:2–3).

On January 2, 1831, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph SMITH in Fayette, New York, that anciently he had taken the Zion of Enoch to himself and then commanded him to go to Ohio to receive the law (D&C 38:4, 32; cf. Moses 7:21). When Joseph Smith arrived at Kirtland, Ohio, in February, he found the Saints organized in a communal society called "the family." He persuaded them to abandon this practice for "the more perfect law of the Lord." On February 9, while in the presence of twelve elders, he received the revelation that embraced "the law of the Church" (HC 1:146–48; D&C 42). This revelation presented the laws of Church government and of moral conduct for members and established the basic principles of consecration (D&C 42:32–39).

The key principles given in the revelations are consistent with those required for celestial living: all things belong to God, and his people are stewards (D&C 38:17; 104:11–14); individuals are to esteem others as themselves (D&C 38:24–27; 51:3, 9; 70:14; 78:6; 82:17); mankind must retain free AGENCY (D&C 104:17); men and women are made equal according to their wants, needs, and family situations (D&C 51:3); and there must be ACCOUNTABILITY (D&C 72:3; 104:13–18). Although the implementation of the law of consecration of property as revealed in the early 1830s was temporarily suspended (cf. HC 4:93), the principles themselves were not discontinued.

THE COVENANTS OF CONSECRATION TODAY. The Lord revealed several purposes for the law of consecration: to bring the Church to stand independent of all other institutions (D&C 78:14); to strengthen Zion, adorning her in beautiful gar-