

FIRE STARTERS: A WEST BROTHERS CONFIRMATION STORY

By Theresa Linden

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Peter is passionate about saving Saint Michael's Church and willing to help, even though he doesn't always go about things the right way. What things in your life are so important that you would be willing to fight for them?
2. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are hidden in Chapter 10 "Secret Meeting." Read the definitions of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit at the end of the discussion questions, then see if you can find them!
3. When Roland questions Peter about his faith, Peter doesn't have the answers, but he remembers their priest saying a person should always be ready with an answer for their faith. After Confirmation, how can a person continue to develop their faith? Name specific resources. Why is it important to do this?
4. Good role models can inspire and influence a person's character, showing us how to apply faith to everyday situations. Caitlyn chooses pop culture role models in the beginning of the story: Maria in *The Sound of Music*, Nancy Drew, and even Wonder Woman (Girl). At the end of the story, she chooses her Confirmation saint, Catherine of Siena. What role models have you looked up to? Keeping in mind that Christianity is counter-cultural, compare the influence of saints over pop culture role models.
5. Confirmation is one of the three sacraments of initiation. What are the other two? Roland considers delaying the sacrament and almost puts a hobby (marksmanship) ahead of it, not understanding its value. How would you explain the importance of this sacrament to him?
6. Both Jarret and Roland feel they aren't ready for the sacrament of Confirmation yet, but for different reasons. Jarret feels unworthy because of past failings. Roland feels like there's a lot to learn and he doesn't see the urgency of it. Is anyone really worthy to receive the gifts of God? Does a person need to feel ready for the sacrament? What is the difference between being ready and being receptive?

7. While some think of Confirmation as a type of graduation from studying the faith, Keefe sees it as the next step in his spiritual journey, which will include much more study of the faith. How does Confirmation prepare a person for their calling?
8. Caitlyn gives up many things that are important to her, some big and others little. She doesn't like it, but she tries to respond without complaint and even joyfully. Recall how she settled for the Confirmation dress she didn't love, how she helped decorate the tree when she really wanted to research, and how she agreed to homeschooling even though she wanted to continue seeing her friends at school. How do you respond to the little and big things that don't go your way?
9. Think of how the characters react to being Confirmed. Jarret feels unworthy of the sacrament. Keefe sees it as a step in his spiritual journey. Roland isn't sure he's ready and doesn't like the community aspect. Peter remembers how he'd hoped to experience the Holy Spirit the way the Apostles did. He also plows ahead without seeking God's will first. And Caitlyn discovers she's stifled the Holy Spirit by not trusting God's will in things that don't go her way. Which of the characters did you find yourself relating to most and why?
10. Peter had been disappointed at his Confirmation when the Holy Spirit didn't come the way He came at Pentecost, with a rush of wind or tongues or fire, or even a zap. How are faithfulness, virtue, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit a better indicator that the Holy Spirit has come?
11. Jesus said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49). Inspired by this verse, the Catholic youth group in this story took the name Fire Starters because they wanted to help fulfill Jesus' desire, sharing their faith with others by their words, actions, and prayers. What does "fire" mean in this verse? How can you and/or your family or youth group help spread the fire that Jesus longs for?



THE 7 GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. **Knowledge** – enables us to know the value of created things in their relation to God, their emptiness apart from being used as instruments in the service of God. This gift lets us put first things first, prizing the friendship of God above all.
2. **Understanding** – helps us to grasp the meaning of the truths of our holy religion. What we believe by faith, we appreciate and relish by understanding. We gain a certitude that moves beyond faith. Our faith is set on fire and our lives give testimony to it.
3. **Counsel** – gives us supernatural prudence, enabling us to choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining Heaven. It applies what we've gained from knowledge and understanding to the specific situations we face. It is supernatural common sense.
4. **Fortitude** – strengthens our souls against fear and laziness. It gives us the ability and desire to face difficult tasks and even danger, to endure our daily crosses without complaint, and to speak up without worrying about being rejected or persecuted.
5. **Piety** – stirs our hearts with love and affection for God as our most loving Father. With this gift, we delight in prayer and the practice of our religion. We also love and respect all things consecrated to Him and those with authority over us, including the Blessed Mother and saints, our parents, superiors, and rulers.
6. **Fear of the Lord** – fills us with great reverence toward God and a dread of displeasing Him. This gift gives us amazement before God, whose friendship we don't want to lose. It is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom.
7. **Wisdom** – embodies all the other gifts. It is the perfection of the theological virtue of faith. It fortifies hope and perfects charity. We judge things from God's point of view, recognizing supernatural value in all things, even suffering, and we direct human affairs according to divine truth.



SURRENDER NOVENA PRAYER

by Servant of God Don Dolindo Ruotolo

Day 1

Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 2

Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. It is against this surrender, deeply against it, to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything.

It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see to their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their mother's way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, "You take care of it."

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 3

How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need, turns to me, looks at me and says to me, "You take care of it," then closes its eyes and rests. In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me, instead, you want me to adapt your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to. So do not act this way, but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: "Hallowed be thy Name," that is, be glorified in my need. "Thy kingdom come," that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with your kingdom. "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," that is, in our need, decide as you see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to me truly: "Thy will be done," which is the same as saying: "You take

care of it,” I will intervene with all my omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 4

You see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry. Close your eyes and say to me with faith: “Thy will be done, You take care of it.” I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say, “You take care of it.” I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than my loving intervention. By my love, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 5

And when I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in my arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mother’s arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 6

You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse—to men themselves, trusting in their intervention—this is what hinders my words and my views. Oh, how much I wish from you this surrender, to help you; and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from my protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in me, rest in me, surrender to me in everything.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 7

I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in the deepest poverty.

No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it any more, because your mind is acute and for you it is very hard to see evil and to trust in me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs, do this, all of you, and you will see great continual silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 8

Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of my grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turning your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. Repose in me, believing in my goodness, and I promise you by my love that if you say, "You take care of it," I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Day 9

Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great rewards, even when I confer on you the grace of immolation, of repentance, and of love. Then what does suffering matter? It seems impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, "Jesus, you take care of it." Do not be afraid, I will take care of things and you will bless my name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal one single act of surrender, remember this well. There is no novena more effective than this.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

Learn more about Theresa Linden and the West Brothers series at
www.theresalinden.com