

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend is **Pentecost**, the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. As such, we'll look at the Sacrament of **Confirmation**, which is the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation, God pours out in a new way the gift of the Holy Spirit (who was first given to us in Baptism) in our lives so that we can live out our Faith as *witnesses* of Jesus.

You remember that the definition of a Sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace. As such, Confirmation is a gift God gives to us. Sometimes, we have spoken of Confirmation as if it were a “coming of age rite”: “*I choose my Faith for my own*” (which is sadly ironic since Confirmation is usually the *last* time we see these students in Church, not the beginning of their commitment to the Faith). This idea of Confirmation gives the idea that we are the primary movers in this Sacrament. The truth is that, as with all the Sacraments, God is the primary mover. God is giving *us* something – His gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not we who are confirming our Faith in Him, but *He who is Confirming us!*

In Confirmation, God pours out His gifts and power into our lives. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit we first hear about in Isaiah 11:2-3a (and so called “Isaian Gifts”). These gifts are given to us to grow in holiness – wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude or courage, piety, and fear of the Lord or wonder and awe. They are given to each of us in Confirmation so that we can know God, get close to Him, make good choices and have the strength to follow our resolve. Like all gifts from God, though, they need to be exercised and used to become strong. I have the gift of music, but even with this gift, if I never practiced my instruments or singing, the gift would lay dormant. God truly gives us these gifts, but we must use them and pray for an outpouring of them, so that we can grow in them.

God also pours out the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, sometimes called the *charisms*. The word *charism* just means “gift” but it is often used to distinguish these from the Isaian Gifts, the seven gifts. The charisms are given for the building up of the Church. Whereas the Isaian gifts are for *me* to grow close to God, the charisms are for me to use to help *others* grow close to God. There is no exhaustive list of charisms, though there are many listed throughout the New Testament, especially in I Corinthians 12. Some charisms are given to some and others to others, but these are given so we can help others get to Heaven. We need to ask God to stir up these gifts in our lives so that we may know how we are to help build up the Church of God.

Jesus established the Catholic Church not so that we could have a format for how to gather and pray together, so that our rites would be organized. He established the Church to spread the Good News of His saving love. He wants, more than anything else, for us to get close to Him, to love Him, to share His life. Everything we believe and practice in our Faith is a result of this desire of God. Confirmation is a Sacrament that sends us out on mission. His Gifts and Charisms are given to us so that we may share the Good News of God's unending, unconditional, merciful love with each person that we meet. This is what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11), and this is why the Holy Spirit is given to us.

Confirmation is a gift from God so that we can grow closer to Him and help others get closer to Him. In the Rite of Confirmation, the *matter* of the Sacrament is the Baptized Christian and the Sacred Chrism. You may remember that the Chrism is an oil with a balsam perfume in it that has been consecrated by the bishop. The person being Confirmed is anointed on the head with the Chrism in the sign of the Cross. The *form* of Confirmation is the laying on of hands, and the words, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The usual minister of the Sacrament is a bishop, however in certain circumstances or with proper delegation by the bishop, a priest may Confirm as well.