

Thoughts from the Second Floor Front  
The III Sunday in Ordinary Time  
January 27, 2019

Confirmation Part I

Throughout this liturgical year we will hear from the gospel according to St. Luke at the Sunday liturgies. St. Luke's account is also known as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit because in the third account, much more so than the others, the Holy Spirit is present. Jesus is propelled by the Spirit into the desert. Jesus prays in the Spirit. He heals in the Spirit. He preaches in the Spirit. This becomes even more apparent in Volume II, the Acts of the Apostles when nothing is undertaken without an appeal to the Holy Spirit, I mention that in light of the next sacrament to be explored: Confirmation.

The history and theology surrounding this sacrament, and its accompanying liturgical celebrations through the centuries, is a clear manifestation of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. While the understanding of the sacrament has varied throughout the centuries, it is almost universally accepted that the celebration of the Confirmation is a celebration of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in and through the lives of the members of the Body of Christ, the Church.

In the earliest days of the Church, the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, were all three given at the same time. This is still the practice in some Rites of the Catholic Church and is practiced that way by our Orthodox brothers and sisters. The infant is Baptized, Confirmed and given a small particle of the Sacred Host or a drop of the Precious Blood. A person was Baptized, Confirmed and given First Holy Communion on the night of the Easter Vigil. This was done by the Bishop alone and it was done with adults. At a time when infant mortality was high, people believed it was imperative that a child be baptized at the earliest possible moment and eventually for a variety of reasons, the rites of Baptism were not relegated to a Bishop only. But the sacrament of Confirmation was and is still reserved to the Bishop, who in the ancient world would travel from Church Community to Church Community and Confirm the Baptism.

Baptism is the initial gift of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is the fullness of the gift of the Spirit with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is not that something was left undone at Baptism, but the celebration of Confirmation today is more integrally linked to both Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. \\\; joining the three Sacraments of Initiation that have over time become separated by the age of the candidate.

Think about discipleship in terms of a journey that unfolds through one's lifetime. Christian maturity is not somehow magically infused in the candidate being confirmed. The Scramjet of Confirmation is an aid to assist the disciple on his or her journey with the knowledge (one of the gifts of the Spirit) that the disciple acquires. An analogy may be helpful. It is pretty much an impossibility for a child who has just reached the age of reason to engage in abstract mathematical reasoning. Regression analysis is rarely taught in elementary school. Over time a child gradually gains the cognitive ability to reason in a manner consistent with higher cognitive abilities. It is one thing to teach a child that there are three apples in front of her. It is another matter entirely to teach the child the concept of the number three.

In a similar manner our faith journey progresses. Baptized into the faith as an infant, into the domestic Church, and immersed into a Christian culture, an individual will make advancements and reach developments into their faith journey. Confirmation does what its name implies. The Sacrament affirms and Spiritually strengthens the disciple to continue on the journey with confidence in the newly given gifts: wisdom, counsel, knowledge, understanding, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord.

Faithfully,

Msgr. Diamond