

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

This Tuesday, October 10th Bishop Hicks will come to the parish to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation upon about 70 young men and women of our parish (plus a few extras from other parishes who have asked to receive the Sacrament here for various reasons). This is a joyous occasion for these young people, their families, and for the entire parish.

The question often arises, what is the effect of the Sacrament of Confirmation upon us? What does it achieve?

This question comes about I think because the effect of this Sacrament is less obvious than all the other Sacraments. Consider for a moment the other Sacraments of the Church. Baptism grants to us the forgiveness of sins and entry into the very life of God and His Church. Reconciliation restores our original baptismal state of holiness after we have sinned and turned away from God. Marriage strengthens men and women to live as witnesses in the world to the very love of God. Holy Orders calls men to administer the Sacraments to the people of the Church and to encourage people who do not know Christ to meet Him. The Anointing of the Sick directly asks God for healing upon the Christian who is suffering in mind and body. And the Holy Eucharist is both the very source of all these Sacraments and the finishing touch upon these Sacraments that make them more effective upon us. However, Confirmation lacks an easy one sentence description of its effects upon us.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is closely tied to the Sacrament of Baptism. So much so, that in some parts of the Catholic Church such as the Eastern Rites, the Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated at the same time with the Sacrament of Baptism. Confirmation then is the “sealing” of the person who has been reborn in Baptism and has been made part of the family of God. The “seal,” you might say, is what strengthens the recipient of God’s grace in Baptism to retain that grace despite all the temptations and difficulties of everyday living. We often speak of the Sacrament of Confirmation as bestowing the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” upon us. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit but those virtues that enable us to live the holy life of God in a world and human society that is so often hostile to living that holy life. I suppose that you could think of Confirmation as a protective coating laid over the freshly restored soul in the same way that eyeglass manufacturers tout the protective coatings on their glasses that keep the new glasses from getting scratched. If you don’t know what I am talking about, ask someone nearby who wears glasses. They will explain.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor