## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph December 26, 2021 Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #50)

In an instant [God] gives to the confirmed soul the fullness of the spiritual maturity. (St. Thomas Aquinas: "My Way of Life")

Over the last year, our reflections have had the aim of giving us a better understanding of and drawing us deeper into the faith we profess. We've looked at God's covenants and the sacraments that are the visible signs of the invisible realities of our faith. It is fitting that we look at the Sacrament of Confirmation as we close out "the Year of the Eucharist and the Parish."

What is the "WHY" of this last statement? The quote at the top of this handout provides the first step in the answer. Confirmation is the last of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation). Recall, if you will, that Baptism brings new birth, institutes us into Christ's ministry— Priest, Prophet and King—makes us members of Christ's Body (the Church) and introduces us, in part, to the third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist, the very pinnacle of our faith, brings us into the closest communion with Jesus. There is an old saying, *you are what you eat*. In the Eucharist, we receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ—in the form of bread and wine—into ourselves. Our participation in the sacrament brings us into the Upper Room at Christ's Last Supper and then to the foot of the cross.

Now, on to Confirmation. What is it? What does it do? Is it scriptural? To answer these questions, first, let us look at what the Church has provided in the Catechism. We can find this in paragraphs 1285 to 1232—a lot of words—so I will paraphrase it for you. Confirmation gives consent to or a deepening of your baptism—completing your initiation into the faith, bringing strength to the graces received in Baptism. In this sacrament we receive the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It *unites us firmly to Christ*, imparting greater strength *to confess the name of Christ boldly and never be ashamed of the cross*. In the Gospel of John, we find these words in chapter 20, verse 22: *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'''* St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians proclaims, *Now the one who confirms us with you in Christ, and who has anointed us is God. And He has sealed us, and He has placed the peace of the Spirit in our hearts*. From this, we see the short form of the explanation, and that it is indeed scriptural. What does this mean for each of us?

Looking again at the quote at the top of this handout, Thomas Aquinas speaks of the *fullness of the spiritual maturity*. What is this maturity? Is it a graduation? Do we now know all we need as disciples? No, the *Spiritual Maturity* proclaimed by St. Thomas Aquinas is not a graduation—it does not mean we have all we need to become disciples of the Good News of Christ. Maturity implies that we have now gained the incite to realize that we may not know enough at all on any given subject. Maturity is an always changing—always moving, always growing—journey into self-awareness—self-management. An American author and poet, William Ward, stated, *To make mistakes is human; to stumble is common place; to be able to laugh at yourself is maturity*. American evangelist Matt Brown tells us, *Mature Christians don't sit idle in their faith, and assume God will do all the work inside of them, when God has directly called them to "make every effort" to draw closer to him.* 

On the third Sunday of Advent, the Gospel reading provide these words, *John [the Baptist]* answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." We see the fulfillment of this in the Acts of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. A mighty wind—the breath of God—and tongues of fire settling on all those present. The Sacrament of Confirmation was/is for each of us a personal Pentecost—a baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. Fire, as we all know, can be both destructive and very useful. Fire, as we all know, has left families homeless or without employment in the destruction of homes and businesses. Yet, fire is useful to cook our food, to warm our homes, and it can be used to purify. In Confirmation, the fire that is spoken of in Sacred Scripture acts to destroy—wipe away—sin and to purify the soul of the faithful.

Our life as a faithful Christian must be a constant conversion. The First Letter of Peter, written to the persecuted Christians of Asia Minor, offers: *Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation (2:2).* It is for each of us to continue to seek after the knowledge promised in Sacred Scripture through the working of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is the doorway to that knowledge.