

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

HAVE SPIRIT WILL TRAVEL...

A couple of weeks ago, on May 17th, about a hundred of our young people here at Saint Charles Parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation administered by our own Bishop John O'Hara- congratulations! Last Friday, fifty of our eighth graders graduated from our wonderful school at Saint Charles-again congratulations on a job well done! I don't know why confirmation and graduation are sort of fixed in my mind. Perhaps because the days are so close together, although many parishes do have confirmation in the Fall.

Maybe the association of the Sacrament of Confirmation with graduation has to do with a sermon I once heard by a priest who said that for many youngsters, when they got confirmed it was like graduation from the Church-meaning that after that sacrament was conferred, they didn't darken the door of a church for many a year unfortunately!

That impression was ratified recently at a talk that was given by Ella Milewska who is director of Youth Faith formation here in the Archdiocese of New York. Ms. Milewska gave a talk to the Priest Council of the Archdiocese. She told us that in reality after the age of thirteen, religious practice stops for many of our young people. This is sad but it is a real fact. For a good number of teenagers, they have "gotten through" the sacraments and now they can move on-yes graduation from the Church! But of course, this is not the way it really should be.

Confirmation completes our initiation as Catholics and so we should be tied more deeply to the faith and more committed to it. I think we could say that we have therefore a "disconnect" in our religious preparation. This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. It was this day, that the first apostles and disciples received the Holy Spirit of God shuttered behind closed doors in the upper room in Jerusalem. The first apostles and disciples were truly a fearful and timid bunch. But that all changed at 9 AM on Pentecost morning when the Holy Spirit came upon them with wind and flame. These disciples were set on fire with the love God and they burst out of the upper room to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost really was the "birthday" of the Catholic Church. On that day, three thousand were baptized into the faith at the inspired preaching of Saint Peter and the other apostles. For those first disciples, confirmation definitely was not graduation from the Church but the start of it all. And that's really the way it should be for all of us as well.

Many of us adults need more enthusiasm in our living out of our Catholic faith. I heard a story years ago about a lector up in the Bronx. He got up to read the Cardinal's letter one Sunday and said, "The Cardinal is against abortion and enthusiasm." "He made a mistake-what he should have said is euthanasia! The Cardinal, the Church, is certainly not against enthusiasm by any means! The word "enthusiasm" according to Webster's dictionary means "Inspiration as by a divine or superhuman power." That's a good definition, for the Holy Spirit should inspire us all with his power to live out our faith more concretely and joyfully, I might add.

It was said of one our presidents, Calvin Coolidge I think, that it looked like "he was weaned on a pickle." Maybe some Christians are like that! Not too happy looking. Saint Teresa of Avila was once quoted as saying, "Lord preserve us from sour faced saints." On this day of Pentecost lets pray for all our young people recently confirmed that the Holy Spirit will joyfully overshadow them and guide them in all the moments of life!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome