

LITURGY BYTES

Symbols in Confirmation

Water, oil and light are tangible signs that tell us something for which words can provide only the barest outline – that God is genuinely with us. We touched on some of these symbols last week in our look at some of the symbols used in the Sacrament of Baptism. This week it's on to the Sacrament that reaffirms Baptism which is Confirmation.



God is here as the hymn “Gather Us In” assures us. What meets our senses makes God present to us. The familiar smell of incense, candles, the warmth of hugs and handshakes, fragrance of flowers adorning the sanctuary are most of what we missed when we were in shutdown mode during the pandemic quarantine last year. Let us look at some familiar symbols, perhaps taken for granted, and find a new meaning!

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the symbols that are outstanding, in my humble opinion, are the laying on of hands, the anointing with the Sacred Chrism and the confirming prayer. Confirmation reaffirms our Baptism, strengthening our experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, already received at the time of our Baptism, but now taking on a more deeper meaning, as we are anointed with the Sacred Chrism.

At Confirmation, we hear in Scripture the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit from the Acts of the Apostles as it happened to them and Mary in the upper room on Pentecost. In preparing candidates for this Sacrament, we reassure them this second coming of the Holy Spirit will not be as dramatic as the Pentecost story. However, once confirmed we are more aware of the gifts working in our lives. The anointing with the Sacred Chrism, sealing us with the gifts of the Spirit, leaves a special mark on each candidate as does the Confirmation prayer when the calling of the Holy Spirit, known as the “epiclesis,” is prayed over the candidates. These are profound moments as one is confirmed because of what these symbols represent and how they impact us. Candidates either reaffirm their baptismal name or add another name for Confirmation. We see evidence of this in Scripture: Simon became Peter, Levi became Matthew, Saul became Paul, to name just a few, when their relationship with God changed quite a bit. This also happens with Confirmation – our relationship with God takes on a new meaning!

As our young people are completing their preparation for Confirmation here at Holy Cross this fall, let us keep them in our prayers that they embrace the graces from this important day in their lives.

Have a blessed, safe and healthy week! ~~~Michele Hahn

*Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.
Amen.*