



### SUNDAY REFLECTION

At this moment, Jesus gives Himself to us as our food and drink, the source of our new life. This is a sign of His love for us. We really commune with Him only in so far as we share in this love by allowing ourselves to be its channels in the world. We do this by helping others to enjoy God's gifts to His creation. Let us ask Jesus to teach us how to be His disciples not only in word but also in action.

As we reflect on the vision of the new Jerusalem, we catch a glimpse of the glory in store for the disciples of Jesus. We might ponder the words of Thomas Aquinas: "This is a holy banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed, grace fill our mind, and the pledge of future glory is given to us."

**STEWARDSHIP:** In today's Gospel, Jesus gives His disciples - and us - a new commandment: "Love one another." Good stewards who spend their time and talents in service to others are well on their way to fulfilling this commandment.

Sophocles  
"Kindness gives birth to kindness."

## READINGS FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

26 MAY '19

**Acts 15:1-2, 22-29:** The church faces its first great challenge to be inclusive as it accepts the Gentiles without insisting that they accept circumcision.

**Rv. 21:10-14, 22-23:** John describes his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem which will be God's final, real and definitive residence with His people, God and the risen Jesus being the unique source of the people's life and worship. God and the Lamb replace the Temple of old.

**Jn. 14:23-29:** As Jesus prepares the disciples for His departure He promises to send the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Angelus Silesius  
"However well of Christ you talk and preach,  
unless He lives within, He is beyond your reach."



This past Tuesday evening 48 teenagers of our parish were confirmed by Bishop Knestout at Prince of Peace Church. Rite of passage or something more?

Just as Baptism *gives* new life, Eucharist *nourishes* life, and Reconciliation *restores* life when it is broken, Confirmation *strengthens* that life by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 1285). It is about strengthening what God has given, and continues to give, to His sons and daughters (cf. CCC 1302-1303). So, while there is a close relationship between the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Confirmation remains a distinct and complete sacrament in its own right, its purpose is to perfect in us that which was begun in Baptism. We might say—in a sense—that we are baptized in order to be confirmed.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is not the Catholic equivalent to the Jewish bar mitzvah. Confirmation is not a "coming of age" celebration. True, most young people are just beginning to pass into early adulthood when they receive the sacrament. But Confirmation is not about coming of age. Reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation does not mark the end of formal religious education. We never outgrow a need for a deeper knowledge and appreciation of our faith.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is not a rite of passage, nor a graduation from religion class, nor a ratification of a personal faith choice. Rather, it's all about what God is doing for his beloved daughters and sons.

The sacrament of confirmation is found in Bible passages such as Acts 8:14–17, 9:17, 19:6, and Hebrews 6:2, which speak of a laying on of hands for the purpose of bestowing the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 6:2 is especially important because it is not a narrative account of how confirmation was given and, thus, cannot be dismissed by those who reject the sacrament as something unique to the apostolic age. In fact, the passage refers to confirmation as one of Christianity's basic teachings, which is to be expected since confirmation, like baptism, is a sacrament of initiation into the Christian life.

We read: "Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:1–2).

Notice how in this passage we are walked through the successive stages of the Christian journey—repentance, faith, baptism, confirmation, resurrection, and judgment. This passage encapsulates the Christian's journey toward heaven and gives what theologians call the order of salvation or the *ordo salutis*. It well qualifies as "the elementary teachings" of the Christian faith.

The laying on of hands mentioned in the passage must be confirmation: The other kinds of the imposition of hands (for ordination and for healing) are not done to each and every Christian and scarcely qualify as part of the order of salvation.

We are born spiritually in the sacrament of Baptism. We become sharers in the divine life of the most Blessed Trinity. We begin to live a supernatural life. As we practice the virtues of faith and hope and love and as we unite with Christ in His Church in offering worship to God, we also grow in grace and goodness.

But at this stage our spiritual life, like the life of a child, is largely self-centered. We tend to be preoccupied with the needs of our own soul, with the effort to "be good." We cannot be wholly self-centered, of course—not if we understand what it means to be a member of Christ's Mystical Body, and not if we understand the significance of the Mass.

But in general our religious life does revolve around self.

When we are confirmed we receive a special grace by which our faith is deepened and strengthened, so that it will be strong enough not only for our own needs but for the needs of others with whom we shall try to share it.

With the onset of adolescence a child begins to assume, progressively more and more, the responsibilities of adulthood. He begins to see his place in the total family picture and in the community at large.

Similarly, the confirmed Christian begins to see more clearly (or ought to) his responsibility to Christ for his neighbor. He becomes deeply concerned (or ought to) with the welfare of Christ-in-the-world—which is the Church—and the welfare of Christ-in-his-neighbor.

It is in this sense that Confirmation is a spiritual "growing up."

In order that we may have such a concern for Church and neighbor, in deed as well as in feeling, the sacrament of Confirmation gives us a special grace and a special power.

Just as the “mark” or character of Baptism made us sharers with Christ in His role of priest, giving us the power to participate with Him in divine worship, so also the character of Confirmation makes us sharers with Christ in His role of *prophet* or teacher.

We now participate with Him in the task of extending His kingdom, of adding new souls to His Mystical Body. Our words and our works are directed not merely to our own sanctification but also to the purpose of making Christ’s truths alive and real for those around us.

The Catechism’s section on Confirmation says that Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Its effects are to:

- Root us more deeply in divine filiation (being children of God)

- Unites us more firmly to Christ

- Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us

- Strengthens our bond with the Church

- Associates us more closely to her mission of bearing witness to Christ

- Helps us and more strictly obliges us to spread and defend the faith by word and deed

A generation ago, it was said that confirmed Catholics were “Soldiers of Christ” in fact as a way of symbolizing that role the bishop would lightly “slap” each confirmandi as part of the ceremony. While the terminology has changed the role we play has not. The effects of Confirmation are the same: the sacrament configures us for a full and active mission of service to Christ and His Church.

The confirmed Christian—whether we call him a spiritual soldier or a spiritual adult—goes forth joyfully in the fulfillment of his vocation. Strong in his faith and with an ardent love for souls which stems from his love for Christ, he feels a continual concern for others. He feels a restless discontent unless he is doing something worthwhile for others—something to ease their burdens in this life, and something to make more secure their promise of life eternal. His words and his actions proclaim to those around him: “Christ lives, and He lives for you.” The grace to do this is the grace which Jesus promised to His Apostles (and to us) when He said: “ You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me... . even to the very ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

To be continued next week.

## **MAY THE MONTH OF MARY      MARIAN DEVOTIONS IN THE CHURCH**

Catholics believe that worship is due to God alone. Catholics do, however, venerate Mary. In other words, we honor our Blessed Mother with great reverence and devotion because she is the Mother of God. Mary is the model of perfect love and obedience to Christ. God preserved Mary from sin, and she conceived our Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing Christ into our world. Catholics can’t help but honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is full of grace, the Mother of God and our Mother, for her “yes” to God that made the Incarnation possible. And without the Incarnation, we would not have salvation. Mary is the most beautiful model of total submission to the will of God. Catholics do not view Mary as equal to Christ, but rather venerate Mary because of her relationship to Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

explains, “Mary’s role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it” (CCC 964).

As Catholics, we pray that we can respond to God’s call to holiness for our lives in the way that Mary did. Mother Theresa prayed to emulate Mary’s devotion to Christ:

“Mary, Mother of Jesus, give me your heart so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate, so full of love and humility that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life, love Him as You loved Him, and serve Him as You served Him...”

*If you would draw close to Jesus, draw close to Mary; if you would draw close to Mary, draw close to Jesus.* That maxim captures a rightly ordered faith and rightly ordered devotion. Anything that pits Jesus against Mary or that depicts them as rivals for devotion is disordered. The entirety of Mary’s role is encapsulated in her injunction at the wedding of Cana, “Do whatever He tells you.” These are the final words of Mary in the New Testament and, in substance, the final words of Mary forever.

Catholics likewise take very seriously the words of Jesus on the cross, “Woman, behold your son.” And to John He said, “Behold your mother.” John the disciple is the synecdoche of the entire body of Christ, the Church. Mary is not only to treat John as her son, and John to treat Mary as his mother; they are mother and son – as are all who are the brothers and sisters of Christ and who therefore recognize His mother as their mother. This is the heart of Marian devotion rightly ordered.

Disordered Marian devotion has been with us since the beginning of the Christian story. Needless to say, there have been, and still are, many other forms of disordered devotion in the life of the Christian community in all its parts. With respect to Marian devotion, popes and councils have frequently tried to correct excesses, although it may be readily admitted that sometimes, as in the late Middle Ages, they have acted less vigorously than they should have. This can be explained, and perhaps excused, in part by legitimate pastoral concern not to infringe on the proper freedom of the faithful in their response to the gospel, keeping in mind “the priesthood of all believers,” and, in part, by a concern not to tear up the wheat along with the tares. While it is true that an immature faith is preferable to no faith at all, the Church has a responsibility to encourage growth toward a faith rightly ordered.

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John Paul II vigorously called for “the evangelization of popular piety.” And, of course, this is a theme powerfully underscored in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. John Paul said that devotion to Mary and other saints, as expressed in patronal feasts, pilgrimages, and other forms of piety, “should not sink to the level of a mere search for protection or for material goods or for bodily health. Rather, the saints should be presented to the faithful as models of life in imitation of Christ as the sure way that leads to Him.” The criterion set forth in the *Catechism* for rightly and wrongly ordered devotion is unequivocal: “What the catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines, in turn, its faith in Christ.” Discerning what is true and what is false devotion to Mary and the other saints engages truths that are Trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, and ecclesial. Any devotion that displaces, overshadows, or obscures the triune God, that impugns the mercy of the one mediator Jesus Christ, that neglects the sanctifying power of the Holy

Spirit, or that tends to separate a particular saint from the whole body of Christ is a disordered devotion.

In Addition to these theological criteria, the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue (*The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, the eighth volume issuing from this dialogue) lists four “practical guidelines” that should be applied in devotion to Mary and the saints. The first is that such devotion should be “imbued with Scripture” and clearly related to the great themes of salvation history. (Witness John Paul II’s addition of the “Luminous Mysteries” to the Rosary.) Second, they should be harmonized with the Eucharistic Liturgy and seasons of the Church’s year. Third, they should be ecumenically sensitive, leaving no doubt as to Christ’s unique role in our salvation. Finally they should be attentive to “cultural mores.” In our time, that means sensitivity to the role of women. Mary should not be depicted as “timidly submissive or repellently pious, but as one who fully and responsibly heard the word of God and acted upon it.”

## PRAYERS

### **The Fiat (Yes) Prayer**

Holy Mary,  
Obtain for me the help that I need,  
to do my very best  
using all the powers within me  
and all the talents and skills I possess,  
according to my possibilities,  
to fulfill God’s plan  
in every circumstance of my life.  
Amen

### **Prayer to the Immaculate Conception**

O God, who by the Immaculate conception  
of the blessed virgin Mary, did prepare a worthy dwelling place for your son,  
we beseech You that, as by the foreseen death of this, your son,  
You did preserve her from all stain, so too you would permit us,  
purified through her intercession, to come unto you.  
Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end.  
Amen.

## PASTOR’S UP-COMING SCHEDULE

Saturday 18 May	Vigil Mass of Fifth Sunday of Easter 5:00 p.m.
Sunday 19 May	Masses Fifth Sunday of Easter 7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Brig 7:30 p.m.
Monday 20 May	Pastor’s Day off Brig 7:40 p.m.
Tuesday 21 May	Mass 8:30 a.m.

Wednesday 22 May Mass 6:30 a.m.  
 Confessions  
 Mass 8:30 a.m.  
 PCRS Mass 10:00  
 Mass Indian Creek Correctional Facility 6:00 p.m. ....

Thursday 23 May Mass 8:30 a.m.  
 Inurnment M. Puchalla  
 Confessions 5:00 -6:30 p.m.  
 Mass 6:30 p.m.  
 Liturgical training Altar Servers 7:00 p.m.

Friday 24 May Mass 8:30 a.m.  
**Quiet Adoration & Reflection 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

Saturday 25 May Mass 8:30 a.m.  
 Prayer Garden service  
 Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.  
 Vigil Mass 6th Sun of Easter 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 26 May 6th Sunday of Easter  
 Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. Deacon Keith's Farewell  
 5:00 p.m. Mass Senior Send-off Graduation Blessing  
 Brig Mass 7:30 p.m.

Monday 27 May Pastor's Day Off  
 Mass 8:30 a.m.  
 Brig 7:40 p.m.

  
 DEVOTION TO SAINTS AND WORSHIP OF GOD:  
**IT'S NOT LIKE A CAKE**



Devotion to Mary and the Saints do not detract from the worship of God. Devotion express love, but love is not a finite good such as a cake, where a larger slice for one person means a smaller slice for everyone else. On the contrary, love multiplies when it is shared, and to love Mary and the Saints gives even more glory to God who created them and saved them.

- Lifted from: *Apologia, Catholic Answer's to Today's Questions* by Fr. Marcus Holden & Fr. Andrew Pinsent


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