Outdoor Confirmations at St. Martha

One exciting innovation that has come out of this pandemic is that we are having half of our collaborative’s Confirmation class this year receive this powerful sacrament with Bishop Robert Reed at St. Martha church in an outdoor ceremony this Friday evening (rain date is Saturday). Even two ceremonies at each of our parishes would not have provided enough room for candidates, sponsors and guests with safe distancing indoors. Therefore, we are taking advantage of the large field at St. Martha to accommodate all the St. Martha confirmandi, as well as those from St. Mary who are open to this opportunity. Throughout our archdiocese, all Confirmations rescheduled from this spring are being celebrated as a Confirmation Liturgy apart from Mass, so they will include a Liturgy of the Word, the Rite of Confirmation, and the concluding rites.

Confirmation will be the third Sacrament of Initiation and a source of strength for these, our youth, as they continue to grow into maturity in their faith and in the world. The Holy Spirit, who in Baptism came to dwell in them, now pours out the sevenfold Gifts of the Spirit as a kind of “spiritual arsenal” to help them to live their faith in the world. The following explanation of these gifts (adapted from catholic.com) is based on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas:

**Wisdom** is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs according to divine truth.

**Understanding** is penetrating insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation—in effect, the ability to “see” God.

**Counsel** allows a person to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation.

**Fortitude** denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles.

**Knowledge** is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice.

**Piety** is, principally, revering God with filial affection, paying worship and duty to God, paying due duty to all men on account of their relationship to God, and honoring the saints and not contradicting Scripture.

**Fear of the Lord** is, in this context, “filial” or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him (as opposed to “servile” fear, whereby we fear punishment).

So, let’s pray for all those who will be Confirmed this week (or on Sep. 3 at St. Mary), that they will be truly open to these gifts of the Holy Spirit. May God’s grace fan the flames of His love for them and theirs for Him, that these gifts may become practical and spiritual strengths in their lives!

~ Fr. Joe

P.S. - Adults who have not been Confirmed can also prepare to receive this sacrament in the future. Any adult Catholics who are interested in completing their sacraments of initiation can contact any of our priests or deacons, or call your parish office.