

“FIRED UP “ WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Congratulations to the 110 young men and women of the parish here at St. Charles that received the Sacrament of Confirmation last Friday! It was truly a great day. We might think a little about the day of our own Confirmation perhaps many years ago! Confirmation was sort of like a “Personal Pentecost” for each of us. On that day, the bishop anointed us with Sacred Chrism and sealed us forever with the gift of the Holy Spirit. In years past, when children received Confirmation, they were told, “You are now a Soldier of Christ.” Maybe some people today do not like such a militaristic analogy for a Christian sacrament. However, the example is a good one. The image of a soldier refers to the idea that a Christian disciple has a spiritual duty to fight in the war between good and evil, light and darkness—a real battle against our fiercest adversary who is the devil! So, in effect, by the Sacrament of Confirmation that was conferred upon us, we are all of us, constituted as warriors for Christ. Our weapons are not guns, bombs and mortars—but rather the sword of the spirit. But what happens to many young Catholics after confirmation today? Instead of becoming more fervent in the faith, they fall away. Sad to say, for many of our youngsters, confirmation is considered as “Graduation” from the church for we do not see a good number of them after that and this is a real tragedy. There is an old joke that I heard once told by a bishop actually at a confirmation. It seemed that several pastors of different faiths got together for lunch one day and were talking about a problem that they had with squirrels. “Blasted squirrels! Complained the Baptist minister. “We can’t get rid of them. They scamper around the rafters of the Church during services. The Methodist pastor agreed; “tried traps and poisons” he griped. “Nothing works!” then the Catholic pastor spoke up. He boasted of having solved the squirrel problem. “I had them all confirmed and we haven’t seen them since!” Of course that is a joke but what is not so funny is that confirmation and the reception of the Holy Spirit is supposed to make us more devout Catholics, capable of being strong advocates for the faith. Many of us do not “tap into” the graces that were given to us in that wonderful sacrament. We received seven spiritual gifts in confirmation—wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, piety, fortitude and fear of the Lord. Today in our hedonistic and material world we truly need the spirit of fortitude or courage in living out our catholic Christian faith—it’s not easy. Saint Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians wrote, “Put on, therefore, the Armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes you will be able to stand your ground.” The Holy Spirit arms with his grace and power to be zealous and committed followers of Christ. At Mass this Sunday, I would ask you all to say a little prayer for all the young people who received the Holy Spirit of God last Friday in confirmation that they always be sincere and dedicated soldiers of Christ!

God bless you,

Fr. Jerome