

Homily – Confirmations – 2023

We heard in the first reading: I will “bring you back to your own land.” (Ez). The Holy Spirit – who inspired Ezekiel – promises to bring us back to the God who created us. Faith already gives us something of that for which we hope. The experience of a personal relationship with Jesus – which the Holy Spirit offers to enhance in you through the sacrament of Confirmation – draws the future into the present. But I would ask you two questions. First, **who is Jesus to you?** Second, **what is the deepest desire of your heart?**

Let me tell you a story. Around the year 601 B.C., the Babylonian ruler besieged Jerusalem and deported to Babylon the king of Judah, his family, and members of the upper class, including Ezekiel. Jerusalem was destroyed a few years later. Ezekiel tells his people that they are responsible for the punishments they are suffering. However, he is convinced that the Lord has chosen some to be enlivened by a new heart, imbued with new breath. They will be a new Israel, restored to a re-created land, Temple, and relationship with God. He does not quite know it, but **he is prophesizing about Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments, and the Church.**

Thanks to the Holy Spirit – whom Jesus promised to us – we have a better understanding of Ezekiel’s words. God does not punish the way the ancient peoples thought. The worst consequence of our sins is self-inflicted alienation from God, who is the source of everything that is good, beautiful, and true. **You are the fruit of God’s love.** It is a love so immense, that it overflows. God not only loved us into being, but He continues to love us into our sanctification,

counting on our cooperation. Our calling is to take part in God's love. Whatever you identify as the deepest desire of your heart, gives you just a glimpse into the immense rejoicing that awaits you as you accept Jesus as your Lord and your God.

As I make the sign of the cross on your forehead with Sacred Chrism, anointing you with the Holy Spirit, it is Jesus who puts his Spirit within you. You were once baptized into the Body of Christ. Today you are confirmed, and more perfectly bound to Christ and his Church. This means that you are enriched with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and called to witness to your personal relationship with Jesus. **You are strengthened to be brought back to your own land, which is heaven, as you work to help others to be brought to heaven with you.**

Pope Francis says that Confirmation is a gift of which we must take good care. (quote) "First of all with prayer, asking the Lord to give us the strength to go forward... we must pray and insist that the Lord listen to us and give us the strength to keep going forward. And the second thing is friendship among you, because in the Church we are not 'me alone', me and God, no, we are all of us, in community." (end of quote). In the community we find the courage to go forward. And finally, be generous to serve each other and the community. **"Prayer, going forward in community and generosity."**

Ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to teach you to pray, to go forward and be generous.