

Tridentine Community News

November 15, 2009

The Extraordinary Form of Confirmation

In two weeks, on Sunday, November 29, Archbishop Allen Vigneron will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation according to the Extraordinary Form at St. Josaphat Church following the 9:30 AM Mass. This will be the first time in approximately 40 years that Confirmation will be administered in this manner in metropolitan Detroit and Windsor.

In preparation for this historic event, today we are running an updated edition of a previously-run column describing the Tridentine Form of Confirmation.

A bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Holy See has issued regulations permitting a priest to administer Confirmation under certain circumstances, such as if a person is at the point of death. For the purposes of this discussion, we will only address the typical situation of a bishop conferring Confirmation, as it is safe to assume that most of those devoted to the Extraordinary Form of the Mass would have a strong preference for a bishop performing this function.

The Sacrament of Confirmation imparts an indelible seal on the soul. It imparts the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. The candidate must have been baptized and should be in the state of grace. The place of the ceremony, inside or outside of Mass, is not specified, and thus is left to local custom.

The bishop traditionally enters the church accompanied by the antiphon *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus* (Behold a great priest). When one is available – which will not be the case this time – the bishop may wear the *cappa magna*, a long cape somewhat akin to a bridal train, during the procession. Upon arrival at the altar, the bishop traditionally intones the *Veni Creator*, invoking the Holy Ghost. He then delivers the Catechetical Instruction to the candidates.

The candidates kneel while the bishop begins, “May the Holy Ghost come down upon you, and may the power of the Most High keep you from sin.” With his hands extended over the candidates, he says a prayer invoking the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Each pair of sponsor and candidate comes forth; the candidate kneels before the bishop, and the sponsor places his or her right hand on the candidate’s right shoulder.

Dipping his thumb into the Holy Chrism and tracing the Sign of the Cross onto the forehead of the candidate, the bishop recites the essential form of the Sacrament: “*N., signo te signo Cru✠cis et confirmo te Chrismate salutis. In nomine Pa✠tris, et Fi✠lii, et*

Spíritus ✠ Sancti.” (N., I seal you with the sign of the Cross and I confirm you with the Chrism of salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.) The confirmed responds: “*Amen.*” The bishop lightly strikes the confirmed upon the cheek, saying: “*Pax tecum*” (Peace be with you). No response is made.

The bishop wipes the forehead of the confirmed with cotton after the anointing. This cotton is later burned and the ashes disposed of in the *sacrarium* of the church, or into the soil outside.

The bishop then washes his hands as the antiphon *Confirma hoc, Deus* is sung: “Confirm, O God, what Thou hast wrought in us, from Thy holy temple which is in Jerusalem.”

While the confirmed all kneel, the bishop recites a prayer asking that the Holy Ghost may come “down upon those whose foreheads we have anointed with the holy Chrism, and signed with the sign of the holy Cross, [and] by His gracious indwelling make them a temple of His glory.” He says a concluding prayer, followed by a special blessing.

The bishop sits down, puts on his mitre, and addresses the sponsors on their duties. The confirmed recite aloud the Apostles’ Creed, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary. The bishop then gives the Pontifical Blessing, after which the *Te Deum* or Psalm 112 (*Laudate Púeri*) is customarily sung as a recessional.

The Ordinary Form of Confirmation, in comparison, begins with a reading from the Acts of the Apostles. A brief homily is given, followed by the Renewal of Baptismal Promises. The Laying on of Hands and the Anointing are similar, although no posture is specified for the candidates. In practical matters, this usually means that the candidates stand before the bishop. Some General Intercession-like prayers follow, then the confirmed recite the Our Father, and the bishop imparts a blessing.

The content of the Sacrament of Confirmation is rather similar between the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms. Perhaps this is why one sees less debate about the wording of the Novus Ordo Form. [Accompanying photo of Vancouver Archbishop Raymond Roussin administering Confirmation in 2008 by Sharon Hu.]

Rehearsal Next Sunday

All candidates and sponsors for the Sacrament of Confirmation are requested to assemble in the front pews of St. Josaphat Church immediately following the 9:30 AM Tridentine Mass next Sunday, November 22. A brief rehearsal of the ceremony will be conducted.

