

# Confirmation: It's Being Done Differently Now



Laying on of hands the first time recalls the baptismal vows.

Photos by Laurence E. Keefe

The ancient Christian rites of confirmation were marked by the new emphasis on community participation when performed last week for more than 200 candidates of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Greece.

The ceremonies, because of the number of confirmands, were enacted on two consecutive evenings in the church's soaring sanctuary by Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey and Fathers Donald Lux, William Spellecy and Frank Lioi.

The president of the Parish Council, Francis Roach, served as commentator for the first evening of confirmations last Wednesday, and introduced the lectors and the priests to the congregation gathered to witness the rites.

Ceremonies this year are different from what most diocesans will remember of their own confirmations.

Ever since Pope Paul promulgated new rites last year and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops explained those rites this summer, noticeable changes have been incorporated.

The confirmation rites are now wholly within the context of the community celebration of Eucharist. Those to be confirmed take an important role in the ceremonies. The priests concelebrating with the bishop share more actively in calling down the Spirit on the confirmands; and music has a greater place in the liturgy.

Last Wednesday, besides the eight children who brought the gifts of bread, wine and communion vessels to the altar, Catherine Zorsch, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zorsch Jr.; Kathleen Wagner, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fredrick Wagner Jr., and David Allan and Mary Leigh Frank, the children of Mr. and Mrs. Allan D. Frank, delivered scripture readings and led the congregation in the prayers of petition.

Shortly before the "chrismation" or anointing with chrism, Fathers Lux, Spellecy and Lioi with Bishop Hickey, raised their hands over the youngsters to call down the Holy Spirit upon them.

Bishop Hickey's homily brought to light the behind-the-scene changes, re-directions and new techniques in the preparation of the candidates.

He profusely thanked the children for inviting him to the church to perform the confirmation. He said that each had written him a letter explaining why they wanted to be confirmed, what specific actions for the community they had been engaged in and their own readings of the significance of the sacrament on their lives.

He said, "And I read each letter, and it took a long time."

He congratulated those involved in preparing the candidates for the sacrament, and was pleased that there had been a mixture of learning and fun in the catechesis.

**A confirmation still requires a bishop: left, Bishop Hickey delivers the homily on the letters requesting confirmation written by those about to receive the sacrament; but now, other priests take part; below, the other priests concelebrate the Eucharist with the bishop.**

