

Church Concert Set in Elmira

Horseheads — "We're blessed with people who like to sing. They can raise the roof," exclaimed Father David Fedor, associate pastor of St. Mary Our Mother. Forty members of the parish will get this chance during a concert at 7 p.m. Sunday, June 2, at St. Patrick's Church in Elmira.

With the theme, "Send Forth Your Spirit," the concert is an attempt by the Church to promote a cultural event, according to Father Fedor, director of the choir. He added that it is also an attempt to promote regionalism in the counties of Schuyler and Chemung.

Featured in the concert will be organ, brass and percussion performances. The two-year-old choral group will begin the concert with Gregorian chant and Latin motets and then will swing into traditional and contemporary selections. David Jackson will be the organist.

"The Catholic Church has been entrusted with a rich heritage of music spanning many centuries. We hope that this concert will give the community of the Southern Tier an opportunity to enjoy some of this music performed by an area parish choir that actively strives to preserve this heritage as well as explore new directions in music for worship," explained Father Fedor who is also regional coordinator of liturgy.

The adult choir is one of three choral groups including Celebrate Life, a folk group and Sunshine, the children's choir, that are sponsored by St. Mary Our Mother. Smaller concerts have been given by the adult choir at parish parties and at shopping malls. Father Fedor noted that the concert on Sunday, which is free and open to the public, is a "community-wide event and that the setting of the Catholic Church will enhance it."

WORD FOR SUNDAY

Father Albert Skamon

Sunday's Readings: (R1) Acts 2:1-11. (R2) 1 Cor. 12:3-7, 12-13. (R3) Jn. 20:19-23.

The constant action of the risen Christ was the giving of the Holy Spirit. His first words after His resurrection were, "Peace be with you! Receive the Holy Spirit" (R3). Fifty days later, this action of Christ climaxed in a glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit (R1). St. Paul teaches that this activity of the Spirit begins at baptism and continues on in each person for the good of all (R).

Confirmation is for the Christian a personal Pentecost. So, three questions: (1) What is the fundamental meaning of confirmation? (2) What about the present liturgy of confirmation? and (3) What is "baptism in the Holy Spirit"?

What is the fundamental meaning of confirmation?

Confirmation is one of the sacraments of Christian initiation. Christian initiation is a process. God-life first has to be given man, then it has to be strengthened, then nourished, just like human life itself. Baptism confers the God-life. Confirmation perfects and strengthens it and the Eucharist nourishes it. These three constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Confirmation deepens the God-life in us. It confers spiritual adulthood by a further giving of the Holy Spirit. This maturing of God-life entails quite naturally a new degree of responsibility for sharing in the mission of the Church. It turns the Christian outward to face the world to which the Church is sent with her saving mission.

The role of the bishop in consecrating the chrism and as the "original" (though not exclusive) minister of the sacrament makes explicit the close link of this gift of the Spirit with the mission Christ gave His Church. Through the apostles, the first bishops, He solemnly mandated the mission to teach all nations.

It is to be noted that the themes of responsibility and adult commitment to Christian living are not in the forefront of this understanding of confirmation. As growing-up brings with it the responsibility of grown-ups, so confirmation, conferring spiritual adulthood as it does, brings with it the responsibility to live the Christian life. Responsibility, commitment, the decision to live the Christian life — these are questions of

education and increasingly meaningful participation in the Eucharist. Confirmation should not be "used" in an attempt to meet these problems.

What about the present liturgy of confirmation?

On August 15, 1971, Pope Paul revised the liturgy of confirmation. The aim of this revision was to set forth more clearly the very essence of the rite of confirmation and to show the intimate connection of confirmation with the other sacraments of Christian initiation. For this reason, confirmation is now linked to baptism and Eucharist. The tie-in with baptism is made by the renewal of baptismal promises and by suggesting that the sponsor at confirmation be the same one as for baptism. The link with the Eucharist is affected by situating confirmation within Mass. Since the sign of peace is given at Mass, the centuries-old tap on the cheek at confirmation (originally a peace sign) is omitted.

What is "baptism in the Holy Spirit"?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a religious experience. It is given to Christians who pursue a spirituality focusing on the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The occasion for such an experience is usually the intense intercession for a person by a community whose prayer-life is oriented to the Holy Spirit. In this experience one becomes aware, as never before, of the presence of God in his life. This awareness often causes a profound change of life.

The gift in this "baptism" is not the beginning of the Holy Spirit's activity in one's life. It is simply a release or an activation of the gifts already given through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. As a consequence of this unleashing of power the Spirit comes to a new visibility, bringing a deeper sense of the presence of the risen Christ, a fresh vigor in prayer, and a greater zeal to witness to God's work in the Church and in the world.

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