

Catechesis for Confirmation

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By THOMAS J. DRISCOLL

The catechesis for confirmation articulates in words and actions the mystery celebrated in the sacrament. Catechesis is a kind of celebration of the Spirit's fullness in confirmation extended into life. Thus catechesis is the link which unites daily living and the sacraments.

The content of the catechesis for confirmation should be an accurate explanation of what the sacrament celebrates and what effects it is meant to have in a person's life. A few suggestions are in order.

First, confirmation catechesis should begin, not with the sacrament itself, but with the Christian life as a whole. That life should be portrayed as embracing all that is truly human. The Christian life should not be

presented as a series of practices, but as a flowing stream involving all of life. This must be done concretely and must be tailored to the intellectual and emotional capacity of those to be catechized.

A second suggestion is to treat confirmation in conjunction with baptism and eucharist. The three sacraments together form the whole of Christian initiation. But, confirmation should not be put on a plane with those two sacraments. Their priority as the major sacraments should be maintained.

If confirmation and its effects are seen as complementary and interacting with baptism and eucharist, there will be less of a tendency to regard confirmation as some kind of magic or mechanical dispenser of grace. The impression will be more easily conveyed that confirmation is another experience in the totality of Christian life, giving shape to that life in conjunction with other experiences.

Another suggestion for catechetical content is to focus on

close we say "blood is thicker than water" (than mere acquaintances). Blood is also necessary for life. How often life has been saved by a blood transfusion. Throwing half the blood away into the fire on the altar symbolized the life of sin. Gone is the sinful life of man. Sprinkling the people with the rest of it symbolized new life for man: one of friendship with God.

As the old covenant was ratified by blood, so was the new. This is my blood, the blood of the covenant (R3). The second reading stresses the superiority of the new covenant over the old. Only Hebrews were made God's chosen people by animal blood; but the blood of Christ made all peoples God's people. The old covenant promised a land flowing with milk and honey for fidelity; the new covenant promises an eternal inheritance.

Sunday is the feast of Corpus Christi — the Body of Christ, as present in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist forges a bond, a link stronger than that of blood between the receiver and Christ and between the receiver and all other receivers. Too often we don't see the incongruity of going to communion and continuing to harbor hate, anger, bitterness and revenge. The best sermon I've ever heard on the Eucharist was one my own mother used to preach to us as kids. Whenever we'd come home after Sunday Mass and begin scuffling, as kids will, mother would say, "Stop that fighting, you just went to Holy Communion." "Where love is, there is Christ," and conversely, "Where Christ is, there should be love."

The feast of Corpus Christi could well prologue the International Eucharistic Congress this August in Philadelphia (by happy coincidence the city of brotherly love). The theme of the Congress is world hunger. There are many hungers of the human family, a hunger for peace, for security, for joy, for freedom, for decency, for food, for clothing, for sleep. But the greatest hunger of man is for love. And this can be found in one place only — in the body of Christ (Corpus Christi). Thus St. Thomas called the Eucharist the salvation of the world: "O Salutaris Hostia!"

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

what confirmation celebrates, namely, the Holy Spirit's fullness in us given in baptism. Confirmation celebrates what God gives and does in us, not what we do with our human endowments. Specifically, the main emphasis should not be shifted to our Christian commitment. Confirmation does not primarily celebrate our making a commitment, but God's gift to us of his Spirit, making such a commitment possible.

The form of catechesis should be both instruction and demonstration. Candidates should be taught the theology, liturgical symbolism and effects of the sacrament. They should be guided in developing their prayer lives. Candidates should see the varieties of self-giving witness possible in our world.

Verbal instruction, however, is not enough. Perhaps more important is the demonstration of the significance of the Spirit for Christian life. The candidates should be immersed in the apostolic work and prayer life of their community. Demonstration which is real apprenticeship is the most effective way of helping recipients value the Christian life. This will be most successful in a genuine Spirit-filled Christian community. Conjured up apostolic projects in the midst of a local community which is apathetically hypocritical will only lead to hypocrisy.

Two conclusions emerge from our considerations. First, a wide range of people should be involved in the catechesis for confirmation. In addition to the usual catechist or parochial school teacher, enthusiastic women and men in the local community and ministerial staff members should be incorporated into the program. One crucial group here is the immediate families of the confirmandi. The witness of a family member can often speak with great effectiveness.

Second, there is a need for post-confirmation catechesis. If the "ex opere operato" efficacy of confirmation does not do away with the need to dispose recipients before the sacrament, it also does not do away with the need to help them afterwards. It is the responsibility of the Christian community to enable the recipients to realize in their lives the effects of confirmation.

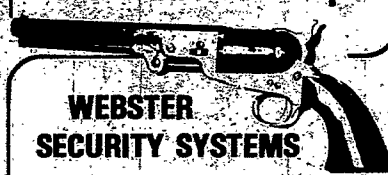
DONATIONS ASKED

The Genesee Valley Chapter of the National Foundation for Sudden Infant Death will sponsor a garage sale, its major fund-raising effort, during July. The group, which donates most of its funds to the research project investigating Sudden Infant Death at the University of Rochester Medical Center, is seeking donations for the sale. Pick up of items can be arranged by contacting Carolyn Park at 482-6886, Carl Gehrs, 377-4018, or Gayle Iuppa, 467-1671.

SWIM CLASSES

Swimming classes sponsored by the Catholic Youth Organization will begin Monday, June 28, at outdoor pools in Rochester and other parts of Monroe County. Red Cross instructors will conduct courses in these classifications: Tiny Tot, Learn-to-Swim and Life Saving. For information and registration: CYO, 454-2030.


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**WORD FOR
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Fr.
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Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 14:12-16, 22-26; (R1) Ex. 24:3-8; (R2) Hebr. 9:11-15.

What God did in the Old Testament, He did by way of example. When an artist is going to paint a picture, he first pencils the sketch lightly on the canvas; then he daubs in the colors. So God, long before He sent His Son, sketched His work in the Old Testament. Thus we say coming events cast their shadows beforehand.

Christ came to establish a new covenant with mankind. To help us better understand it, God had, as it were, a "dry run" with the Hebrews. The covenant He had made with them sheds light on the covenant He has made with us.

The first reading describes the old covenant which God made with the Hebrews through Moses. The place was Mt. Sinai. God took the initiative, as always, and invited the Hebrews to a covenant of friendship with Himself. Moses "related all the words of the Lord" which were chiefly the ten commandments.

"Will you agree to keep them?" Moses asked.

"We'll do everything the Lord has told us," the people answered.

"O.K.," said Moses, and he wrote down everything. God's stipulations and the people's assent.

The next day, to put teeth into their agreement, Moses built an altar, surrounded it with 12 pillars symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel. Because the Levitical priesthood had not yet been established, Moses had certain young Israelites kill the victims for the sacrifice. He took half the blood and splashed it on the altar which symbolized God. Then he reread the agreement made the day before to the people. After reaffirming their consent, he sprinkled the rest of the blood on them.

Blood has a two-fold significance: kinship and life. Blood makes men relatives, blood-brothers. The relationship is so

MINI EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
Sunday, June 20
FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Beginning 2:30 at St. Mary's - Dansville. Will then proceed to Sacred Heart Church - Perkinsville. 4:30 at St. Joseph's - Wayland. Former parishioners invited to participate to honor the longest continuous resident of this area, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

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