

CHURCH TRADITIONS

The Rite of Confirmation

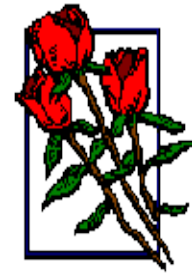
One of the many customs and traditions of the Lutheran church that dates back to the infancy stages of Lutheranism is the Rite of Confirmation. The Rite of Confirmation is one of the customs of the Church that links us with the past and also leads us into the future. As we will celebrate this rite on the Sunday that is Pentecost Sunday, we would like to share a few thoughts about this custom...



THE PROCESSION The Confirmands begin this service by walking down the aisle. Even though this walk is a symbol it is not an ordinary walking that the young person ventures. For the Confirmand is not walking into an ordinary building, but as they walk down the aisle of the Church to the steps of the Altar of our Lord... this is a symbol that this young person is now taking this walk with Christ of their own will. This walk is the beginning of a

new walk as they live out their Christian life.

THE FLOWER NEAR THE HEART The Bible speaks of Jesus as a flower. For example, in one passage (The Song of Solomon 2:1) Christ says of Himself; *"I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley"*. Those flowers, then along with others, represent Christ. And the fact that a flower, representative of Jesus, lives close to the Confirmands heart is an indication that the truth of Jesus dwells, invisibly, but



actually in their hearts.



THE WHITE ROBE... The white robe worn by the Confirmands is a symbol of the Christian's holiness and sinlessness in the sight of his Creator. Lutheran Confirmands know that such sinlessness is not a matter of their own doing. They know that they are sinners. But by God's grace they have learned that Christ took our sins in His own body on the Cross; *"that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."* They believe *"that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."* So they can look at their white

robe and, conscious of its spiritual significance, they can pray confidently:

**"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, My Glorious Dress.
Wherein before My God I'll stand
When I shall reach the heavenly land."**

THE BENDED KNEE... When the Confirmand kneels in the presence of God, they are saying before all the world that God is above them and that they are beneath God and that His Word is for them the principle by which they wish to live their life.

THE PUBLIC HANDCLASP... (*The Promise*)...

Loyalty to Christ, both in what a person believes and in the way he lives, must be a **constant** loyalty, even until death. Only "*he that endures to the end shall be saved*".

And that is what the handclasp symbolizes, which the Confirmand gives in the presence of the assembled congregation. It is a pledge that they will remain true to the Lord Jesus Christ and will live in harmony with the Gospel of Christ all the days of their life.



THE LAYING ON OF HANDS... (*The Blessing*)... The Pastor lays his hand upon the head of each Confirmand, and solemnly blesses them invoking the name of God the Holy Spirit.

Following that, the Pastor proclaims a short passage from the Scriptures which is designed to guide the individual Christian through their entire life. Through this, the Confirmand is graced with both a general and a special **blessing**, pronounced by his

pastor in the name of the church and his Lord.

THE RECESSION... At the close of the service the Confirmand makes a symbolic walk out of the church. This walk is to symbolize that the Young Person now is walking out into the world with the Lord as their guide. Now that they have confirmed their baptismal vow and assumed adult responsibilities and privileges within the holy, christian church, the young person goes forward to take up their daily tasks, living out their lives to the glory of God and the service of humanity. The recession is also a symbol of their journey towards heaven,

"With the Cross of Jesus going on before..."

holy Spirit, come and shine
On our souls with beams divine
Issuing from your radiance bright.
Come, O Father of the poor,
Ever bounteous of your store,
Come, our hearts unfailing light.

