

A Sermon from May 20, 2018

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Pentecost/Confirmation Sunday, May 20, 2018

An Open letter to the confirmands as they Affirm their Baptism.

Dear Sophie, Josh, Marie and Stella,

Congratulations! You made it! You have completed two years of study. Two years of discussions, handouts, questions, DVD clips, service projects, bible readings, donuts, puppet shows, a Reformation skit and so much more. Many Sunday mornings you all sat on the couches in our classroom struggling to keep your eyes open – and yet you persevered and here you are today!

You know, your Confirmation class has been different than any other I have ever taught, for two reasons.....

1) First of all, the world is different than even our last Confirmation class that was confirmed in 2015. You all have had to wrestle with that and have done an amazing job with asking some difficult questions and struggling with some tough subjects.

2) Second, you are the first class of Confirmation students that includes someone that I baptized. And not just one of you, as it turns out, I baptized ALL of you! (So, thank you for making me feel old!)

Suffice it to say, you have come a long way from those babies and children that were brought here to this baptismal font all those years ago. You have also come a long way from the middle schoolers that you were when you started Confirmation class.

(Sidenote: just last Sunday I showed the Confirmation students the questionnaires that each of them had filled out at our very FIRST Confirmation class two years ago. They all had a good laugh at what they had written about themselves.)

Most of our Confirmation classes started with us sharing our High and Low's from the week with one another. Through listening to you I have learned what is important to you, what makes you happy, what makes you frustrated, where your heart lies. I have also learned that you are smart, you are inquisitive, and you have good hearts. It has been my honor and privilege to grow together with you over the last two years.

Today I want to recap some of the important things we talked about, the things I want to make sure you know and remember. They are also things that I want everyone here today to know and remember.

Number 1: You do not have to believe what you think the rest of us want you to believe. Believe what you believe – and be authentic in that. It is okay to ask questions. It is okay to have doubts. It is okay to not believe every single word that is written in the bible. It is okay to be confused by all of this religious stuff. Trust me; I am. It is okay to believe some of it, but not all of it. Like I said: Be authentic in what you believe.

Number 2: Remember that you are allowed to make mistakes. Even the book of Ecclesiastes (7:20) says, "Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning." We all make mistakes, but those mistakes are not what define us. When we, as a Church, confirm you and welcome you fully into this community of faith, we are not asking you to be perfect; (none of us are perfect) we are simply asking you to open yourself up to the grace and love of God.

Number 3: Here's the thing: Your commitments to Confirmation class are now over and done. You do not have to come to church. But, it is my hope and prayer that you WILL come to church. But even more than that: it is my hope and prayer that you all will to come to church because you WANT to.

I want you to come to church not because you believe everything I say or because your parents come or because you feel guilty if you don't.

I want you to come to church because this is a safe space for you to be you.

I want you to come to church because this is a place where you can reflect on life and get support from people who truly care about you.

I want you to come to church because this is a place where you can serve others, see an alternative vision for the world and learn how to show compassion and humility and kindness.

You all have the capacity within you to do great things and we, as a Church, want to help you reach your fullest potential.

I want you to come to church because we want to be part of your stories; and, perhaps even more importantly, this church needs you to be a part of our story as well. This community needs you, just as you need this community.

I want you to come to church because sometimes it's not all about you and what you want. Sometimes it's about what others may need.

I want you to come to and be part of the church because – we ALL need to be reminded, and reminded often, that we are beloved children of God, who are forgiven and cherished by the very Creator of the Universe.

Today you will confirm your faith and affirm your baptisms. I will lay hands on you, as others have laid hands on me in the past, a sign of the passing on of the Holy Spirit from one person to another. Your parents, families, the congregation and I will pray over you, asking God to send the Holy Spirit to you and give you courage in your belief, whatever that might look like.

But remember: Confirmation is not the last step on your faith journey; it is one of the first steps.

Remember what Space Frog learned: Confirmation is not conforming, nor is it a graduation. It's just a milestone on the path with many stones along the way.

In your life there will be:

times of belief and unbelief,
spiritual highs and spiritual lows.

There will probably be times when your faith is not that important to you and other times when your faith means everything to you.

Remember it is ALL part of the journey. It is all part of the life as a Christian. I encourage you to keep seeking Jesus, keep on the path of faith and keep on this journey of growth. Don't step off the path just because the two years of Confirmation class is over. You may now be on a different stone, but you are still on the path, still on the journey.

A journey where the Holy Spirit is your traveling companion. Were all of us are your traveling companions as well. So, as your travel down lives path, my prayer for you will be that you:

- Keep seeking and asking those tough questions, but at the same time,
- Embrace the unknown and the mysteries of faith.
- Love God, love others and love yourself.
- Be kind. Show compassion. Extend grace. Love without fear. Shine light in a world that too often is filled with darkness.
- Reflect God's love upon this church, on your community and on the world.
- And above all: May the Holy Spirit surround you with love, guide your way and bless your journey. Amen.

