

Homily 5th Sunday in Easter Year B (29.4.18)

## Confirmation Weekend

It's a very special occasion this weekend with all these young people to be confirmed as they complete their initiation into the Church. I will be giving to each of them, before the end of Mass, a letter from the Bishop, congratulating them on the fulfillment of their baptismal promises.

And when Jesus says,

"I am the vine, and you are the branches,"

there is nothing truer than that. With Jesus we live - cut off from Him, we wither. But there's a more subtle truth about that for these young people. Because as Jesus says elsewhere,

"No one can come to the Father except through me."

And the reality is, no one can come to Him, except through the Church, and being cut off from the Church is the same as being cut off from Christ; you will wither and die.

Because the experience of Christ is an experience that's embodied in community, embodied in the body of Christ, sacramentally and grace-filled. When we go it alone, and the world sometimes tells us to go it alone and stand on our own two feet, we can be very lonely. The Church as community, helps us to relate to one another more deeply. 'No one can come to the Father except through Me.' There is a truth in that phrase, and that truth, of course, is about the effort we have to put in to develop as mature Christians, and grow and become fully spirit filled Catholics.

Everyone here, all of us, adults, young people, know that the confirmation we received is an opening up to real life, an opening up to a new life in the Spirit. The opposite to life in the Spirit is a miserable, ultimately pointless life of sin, leading to eternal death. It's a simple choice that we learn very slowly in life. And it's the responses we make to those Spirit-filled inspirations, the deepest desires of our heart, that tell us, THIS is where life and happiness really is.

I'll give a simple, daft example. There's too much chocolate before us. Do we eat it all or do we save some? We know when we eat all that chocolate, that is was wrong because it's not good for us, but we know that chocolate is good in itself. The choices we face in life are related to the gift of wisdom - one of the gifts we receive in the sacrament of Confirmation, and the ability to make the right choice comes from the Spirit, and the guidance we receive through the teachings of the Church. When we go against the grain, when we turn towards the negative, towards death, towards everything that's wrong, then we walk away from the Spirit, and something of our heart and personality is affected. But it's when we choose LIFE and LIFE-giving inspirations, that the Spirit comes to us, strengthens our resolve and lives within our heart and souls.

Yes, you receive the Holy Spirit in this sacrament. You complete, as it were, your initiation into the body of Christ. We focus on the words of Christ, "I am the vine, you are the branches." The Church is the root of that vine. Be faithful to that root, be branches attached to the vine, and you will be guided in the choices you make, and ultimately be happy in this world and the next!