

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Passion/ Palm Sunday  
Saturday, April 16, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, April 17, 2011 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

## “Every Knee Shall Bow & Every Tongue Confess”

Philippians 2:5-11

In our Epistle lesson, we hear St. Paul exhort all people to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and to give glory to God the Father. That is why we have gathered here today. Not only so that we can confess our faith in God, hear the Good News of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of sin, and receive the sure promise of eternal life and salvation found in Christ’s Body and Blood. But we have also gathered together because four young women are going to confirm the faith of their Baptism, and they are going to publicly confess their faith in the True God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This confession of faith is an important step in their growth as Christians. When they were baptized as infants, there were sponsors who answered the questions for them and confessed on their behalf that Jesus Christ is Lord. There were sponsors who stated for them their faith in God in the words of the Apostle’s Creed. Now that they have grown up in that Baptismal faith, now that they have studied God’s Word, today each of these four young ladies are going to make a personal public confession of their faith and a lifelong pledge to be faithful to Christ and His Church.

They are going to make the same pledge of faith that I made and most of you made when we were their age. After they have stated the words of

the Apostle's Creed, reaffirming the faith created in them at their Baptism, I will ask them several questions. And they will answer the same question that all people have answered as they go through the rite of Confirmation.

I will ask them: "Do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the divine Word, to be faithful in the use of God's Word and sacraments, which are his means of grace, and in faith, word, and action to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?" And they will answer: "I do so intend by the grace of God."

This is a very important question. This is a question, although the wording may have changed a little over the years, this is a question that has been asked of those hungering and thirsting for the body and blood of Christ since the earliest days of the Christian church.

This one question encompasses everything that Confirmation is about. Confirmation is not just about doing memory work or passing tests. Confirmation is not some hoop that the Church makes a person jump through before they can receive Holy Communion. Confirmation is not a graduation ceremony that ends any serious Bible study in a person's life.

Confirmation Day is when a baptized Christian publicly announces that they would rather suffer death than to fall away from faithfully coming to hear God's Word and receive His Sacrament.

The reason that this day is so special in the lives of these young people is not because they got to wear a new dress, or because they get to be the center of attention all day. This day is a special day in the lives of these four girls, because today, they begin their adult Christian life.

I have seen through our study of God's Word these past two years, their relationship with God has grown. They are no longer like the people who greeted Jesus on Palm Sunday with joy, but with a superficial understanding of who He was. By Good Friday, the crowd had given up on Him and did not care that He was being unjustly crucified.

These four are not like that. Last Sunday, during their questioning, and for much of this past year, they demonstrated that they have a firm understanding of who God is and what He has done for them in their lives. They often said that they didn't know anything and that they were going to fail the questioning (but I think they were just hoping that I would have sympathy and make the test easier. God is full of grace. Apparently, I am not).

I am quite confident they have come to understand their relationship with God. They know the truth of God's Word. They know that it is only through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that their sins have been forgiven.

They certainly have not come to a full and complete understanding of Him, but who has? As Scripture says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" No one is capable of such knowledge in this life, but that is the nature of faith -- being absolutely sure of that which we cannot see.

These four have faith. They believe the words of St. Paul that "at the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." And in a few minutes, they are going to kneel before the Lord, and they are going to confess before Christ and His Church their continued devotion and faith in the promises which they received in Holy

Baptism.

Confirmation Day is a wonderful day in the life of a Christian. The church will now see you as adults. You are given the opportunity to make the good confession of faith that St. Paul continually encourages of us all. And most importantly, you now join the community of believers in receiving Christ's Body and Blood.

The faith that these young women will confess is not new faith. It is the faith of their Baptism. Now that they are at an age and a level of understanding where they are able to examine themselves, as St. Paul says we should do prior to receiving the Sacrament, these four adult Christians will now partake of the miracle of receiving the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and with it forgiveness for all their sin, and the sure promise of eternal life and salvation.

This faith created in Baptism, and this faith confessed by these four girls is a mystery that we do not attempt to understand with our minds, but rather is something that the Holy Spirit instills in our hearts.

The faith that you have is a gift from God. Appreciate that gift. It is my prayer that the faith you confess today will be with you and carry you through the rest of your life. Amen.