

Today is the Sunday after Easter and we give thanks to God for these **24 young men and women** who have been preparing themselves over the past eight months to understand what it means to be a follower of Christ and the cost that is involved in being a faithful follower. Today they will make a public proclamation that they would indeed follow the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and that they would be willing to take up the cross, deny themselves and follow him daily. They will make their own solemn promises that they would pray and read the bible regularly to grow in God's love and discern his will for their lives. According to their promise they would strive to live a life of joyful obedience to God and of love and care for others.

The promises that they make today cannot be carried out by their own strength. In the Old Testament reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel the Lord says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." God has promised to give a new heart and a new Spirit to those who put their trust in Jesus. It is only through the transformation of the heart that we will be able to follow Jesus faithfully. The transformation of the heart is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In the epistle reading taken from the letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that if the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells within us then, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwells in us. Therefore he says that we are to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. We are called to put to death the deeds of the body through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the same Holy Spirit who bears witness that we are the children of God. We are called to mortify our sinful self and live a life of honesty, integrity and holiness.

We have just celebrated Easter last week and we are aware that Christ defeated Satan, sin, death, evil and all the principalities and powers on the cross as he rose again on the third day. The resurrection of Jesus transformed the lives of the disciples upside down. Joy, peace, power and new life are given to the disciples and to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection transforms our sorrows into joy just as it did for Mary Magdalene who was weeping at the tomb. The risen Jesus completely transformed her life as she was the first apostle to carry out the good news to the remaining disciples. Likewise, Jesus appeared to the disciples who were locked up in the upper room and he came into their midst and said, "Peace be with you!" After this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Joy and peace filled the lives of the disciples. Moreover, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost empowered them and made them bold witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That same power of the Holy Spirit is given to every believer and more so to our confirmation students this morning as the Bishop lays his hands on them and prays for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to be sent afresh on these young people. The resurrection of Jesus transformed the disciples inside out. Twelve ordinary men changed the world upside because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This morning we pray the God will use these **24 young people** and us to bring about transformation both in our lives and in the world around us.