

Greetings to you! Today is the first Sunday after Easter and an important day for us as we celebrate the confirmation of twenty- eight people. We praise God for their public proclamation that they will be faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have made their promises and the Bishop has laid his hands on them praying for the Holy Spirit to empower them and to guide them in the days to come. In the OT reading we heard from the prophet Ezekiel the promise of the Lord that he will give his people a new heart and a new spirit. He will remove the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. He promises to put his Spirit within us so that we will be able to keep his commands and walk in his ways. All of us need this new heart which is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In the NT reading Paul reminds us that the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead has been given to reside within the heart of every believer. The Holy Spirit is the one who will give life to our mortal bodies. Therefore Paul urges us not to live according to the desires of the flesh, because if we do then we will die. However, if by the power of the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body then we will live. All those led by the Spirit of God are children of God. Paul also reminds us that we did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but that we have received a spirit of adoption so that we can call God as Abba Father! In other word we are all part of the family of God when we receive Jesus into our lives and are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is the one who bears witness that we are indeed the sons and daughters of God.

Confirmation is in many ways the beginning of this journey with God. The evil one always wants us to go away from God and fulfill the desires of the flesh rather than that of the Spirit. Our sinful nature however does not die permanently as we would like it to. It keeps popping its ugly head every now and then. However, we are called to make use of the power of the resurrection that is available within us. We have not been left alone to defend for ourselves. Fifty days after the resurrection on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the disciples. From that day on till today God has been pouring out his Holy Spirit upon every single believer. He is our constant companion who will help and strengthen us in our moments of weakness. He is our great encourager and helper. Jesus also reminds us that if we love him then we will keep his commandments. Obedience comes out of gratitude for what Jesus as done for us on the cross. This obedience is possible with the power and presence of God's Holy Spirit in our lives.

We praise God with all the company of heaven for all these newly confirmed candidates who have decided to follow Jesus no matter what the cost may be. If we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ then suffering is also part of that inheritance. We may face suffering because we are followers of Christ, but God's presence has been made real through the indwelling Holy Spirit. May we all on this Confirmation Sunday pledge that we will indeed be led by the Spirit of God rather than

by our sinful and selfish desires. May we also be confident that no matter what we have to suffer God's presence is going to be with us. May we ask the Holy Spirit of God to empower us that we would indeed be children of the resurrection showing joy and peace, power and new life as we go out in His name.

Paul Swarup

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