

## **Incarnate Word Tract Series #21 Holy Confirmation**

Is Confirmation one of the Sacraments? That depends upon what you mean by the word "Sacrament".

Confirmation is not a "Holy Act" instituted directly by Christ, which communicates and implants eternal salvation, in the same way as Baptism, Communion, or Absolution.

Confirmation is a "Holy Act" instituted by the Church in order to train, teach and guide its people and to place them before God's throne in prayer.

### **Confirmation in the Ancient Church**

The word "Confirmation" means "strengthening" or "establishing" the faith of the Christian. The ancient Church confirmed together with Holy Baptism. Never is there any mention made of Holy Confirmation apart from Baptism in the early Church.

The child or adult would be cleansed of sin and receive the gift of faith in Baptism. Then the bishop or his representative prayed that this person might grow in grace and become established and strengthened in his baptismal faith. Such a prayer for strengthening was accompanied by the laying on of hands and by an anointing with oil.

### **Confirmation in Modern Lutheranism**

Today when a child is baptized in the Lutheran Church, he is also "confirmed" in much the same way as the ancient Church did it. After the Baptism proper, the pastor lays his hands on the person and says,

"Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten thee again of water and of the Spirit, and hath forgiven thee all thy sins, **strengthen thee with His grace** unto life everlasting. Amen."

A prayer is then offered that God would "keep him in his baptismal grace," that he grow in faith and life, and not lose his inheritance of eternal life. The modern Lutheran agendas do not forbid the ancient anointing with oil during this invocation for God's strengthening of the individual.

A "second Confirmation" takes place in most Lutheran parishes when the child is between ten and fourteen years of age. After instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Our Father, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion, the child kneels on an appointed day. The pastor lays his hands on the child's head and prays that the Father might renew and increase in the individual the seven fold gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Authority of the Church**

“But that is not in the Bible!” some argue. “Can the Church do that?” Absolutely! The Church has the right and the duty to institute anything it wishes in order to “teach all nations,” and it has the right to expect the people to use these institutions that they may learn and grow in understanding God’s mercy. The Church must always be on guard, however, that it never confuses human institutions with the Means of Grace instituted by Christ.

Holy Baptism, instituted by Christ to give forgiveness, faith, and everlasting life, is never to be repeated. Such a repetition would be a denial of the work of Christ.

Perhaps to repeat the rite of Confirmation is somewhat inconsistent with the historical Church. Perhaps it is a problem which merits further study. But we cannot say that it is a sin to repeat Holy Confirmation, instituted by the Church for teaching, instructing and strengthening the people in the grace which is given through Christ’s Sacraments.