

I am so glad to welcome all of you this morning for your Confirmation. Thank you for the patience you have shown over these many months as COVID has not only resulted in this significant delay to your Confirmation Day, it was supposed to be in June, but also because Bishop McGrattan can't be with you today. I am honoured to share in this day with you and be given special permission by the Bishop to confirm you, as his representative.

One of the things I have done in preparing for today, is to read your letters addressed to Bishop McGrattan. Thank you for the thoughtful, caring a respectful way you wrote to the Bishop.

I was so pleased to read of your Apostolic Service including things like: caring for younger siblings, attending to an 88 year old great grandmother, serving at Inn from the Cold, helping at your school as crossing guards. Some of you love sports, like playing for the Vancouver Whitecaps academy team. One of you spoke of your love for the colours green, orange, and then went to say my favorite airplane is the Lockheed Martin F-35.

Many of you spoke of your love of your pets and the importance of your family.

You all had thoughtful reasons why you chose your Confirmation Saints. Some of you chose saints, like Sebastian and Thomas More who were killed for their faith. One of you chose a woman who was declared a Saint in 2014, St Mother Theresa of Kolkata - whose love for the poorest of the poor showed how close she was to Jesus. One of you chose St. Bernard, after whom the slobbering lumbering massive canine is named. This is because St Bernard founded the St Bernard Hospice in the Swiss Alps that has served travellers for almost 1000 years.

What most delighted me in reading your letters was what you said about how Confirmation will be the Sacrament by which you become fully initiated into the Catholic Church. It is the Sacrament where you will receive the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit in a special way. This is what some of you wrote:

"The sacrament of Confirmation will bring me closer to the Lord because I will be fully with the Church and my religion will be clarified."

"In my eyes, the Sacrament of Confirmation is away to grow closer to God. Some people might think that after this sacrament you don't need to do much else. But I know that the sacrament is a start to a better relationship with God. I desire to receive the sacrament because I know that it will make me a better person."

"My desire is to grow spiritually in Catholic belief and the sacrament of Confirmation will help me to move in and out of the other sacraments,

"For me, finishing the sacraments of initiation means I will become closer to Jesus."

These are all great testimonies that support what I want to say now. With your confirmation you are going to state again what your parents said on your behalf when you were baptized.

I have in my hand here the Seal for St. Peter's. This seal is used on official documents, like your Confirmation Certificate and is placed over my name. The seal confirms that this document is authentic. When you are confirmed in a few minutes I will, using your confirmation saint's name say: "Be Sealed with the Holy Spirit" With this anointing you will have a seal confirming you are fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church. It is my prayer that you will then come to discover what it means to live confidently because you are sealed by the Holy Spirit. There are three important things this sealing declares:

That you truly belong to Jesus. That you want to grow in believing what Jesus taught, and you want to mature in behaving in the way Jesus lived.

To belong, believe and behave are three ways you will know that you are especially and authentically part of the family of Jesus.

The first reading we heard was from the Old Testament, a person who lived hundreds of years before Jesus. His name was Isaiah. In this reading from the Prophet Isaiah - a reading Jesus quoted right at the beginning of his public ministry, we have the language of belonging.

Listen to these belonging words:

To proclaim good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

The reading speaks of those who will be the descendants and offspring who will come from every nation. That includes you and me.

This theme of belonging is picked up in the readings from the Acts of the Apostles – this is from the New Testament where we are told that people from around the world could hear the apostles, especially Peter, teach about the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus and his sending the Holy Spirit. Peter says to them "Listen to what I say to you" When we are growing as those who belong to Jesus we also want to deepen believing what he says to us through the teaching of the Church, as we receive it at home, in our schools and in our parish of St. Peter's.

And this in turn brings me to the Gospel where Jesus says that those who love him will keep his word as the Holy Spirit guides us in how we live our lives. To keep the word of Jesus means to love as Jesus loves, and this has to do with behaving as Jesus did.

Let me quote two more of your letters that captures how to belong, influences what we believe and how we behave.

I would like to receive the sacrament of confirmation because it will help make my faith stronger, get closer to God and create a strong bond. I want to help others, be more involved and love more.

Confirmation is important to me because it brings me closer to God, and sets free the Holy Spirit inside me. As I get older, I have more decisions to make and I want God the Holy Spirit to help guide me.

To be sealed with the Holy Spirit today will declare you are an authentic Christian and one who belongs to Jesus who will shape your believing and behaviour so you can live a passionate, courageous and purposeful life as one of the family here in the Catholic Church,