

Sermon: Confirmation

Texts:

Matthew 22:37,39: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... And: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Proverbs 4:23: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

Revelation 2:10: “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Goal: That the confirmands will persevere in faith, live/love and hope till the end.

Dear Confirmands Teneal, Aimee, Mari; Dear Friends in Christ,

Introduction: These three girls had the privilege to go through the Bible and the Catechism in two years. The faith that was given to them when they were baptized was watered and nurtured weekly. They grew up not only in knowledge, but especially in faith and commitment. They will renew/confirm the vows their parents and godparents made before God when they were baptized; and God will renew His holy covenant with them when they come for the very first time to the Holy Communion.

The three of them chose Bible verses as a moto/guideline for their lives. The three verses chosen build up a nice sequence of faith – love – life – and hope, what, we can say, is a summary of the Christian life, which began at our baptism and will be accomplished when we meet the Lord in heaven.

I – Aimee chose Matthew 22:37,39: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... And: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus Himself summarized the Ten Commandments with these words. And He said: “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” This means: The entire Old Testament is summarized here: To love God and to love our neighbor.

We cannot love by the force of the Law. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Love always begins with God, who gives us freedom and a new life and enables us to love Him. This was the situation when He delivered the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt and gave them the Commandments; and this is the situation when Jesus delivers us from the slavery of the devil, sin and death, and calls us to a new life. “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Receiving the new life by faith in Jesus we cannot but love God with “all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself”.

To be a Christian and a church goer is not just a matter of obeying some rules and performing some duties. It is a matter of faith and love. If we don't trust God over all, if we don't believe in His promises in Jesus Christ, if we don't allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, we are just nominal Christians, but not real. Love is something that comes from the heart of God and fills our heart, enabling us to love God and to love our neighbor in thoughts, words and deeds. Faith shows itself by deeds of love.

Aimee: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... And: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

II – Mari chose Proverbs 4:23: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

The Psalmist asks: “How can a young man (or a young girl) keep his way pure (or: guard her heart)? By living according to Your word”
(Psalm 119:9).

Our heart likes to deceive us. Many has as rule for their lives: *Follow what your heart says*. No; our heart is not the right guide for our life. By nature, our heart is far from God and inclined to do the worst. Jesus said: “For from within, out of men’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean” (Mark 7:21,22).

Our heart needs to be renewed. And only God can renew it. Therefore, we sing in our Ordinary Liturgy the words of Psalm 51:10: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” And this happens when we are washed by the water of the Holy Baptism, that is renewed daily when we ask for forgiveness and believe that God forgives us for the sake of Jesus’ blood and righteousness. The Holy Spirit lives in us and our heart becomes not a fount of evil, but a “wellspring of life”.

The Apostle Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit which flow from a pure heart as a “wellspring of life: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23).

This new life is linked with the text that Aimee chose: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love is not just a matter of words, but a matter of practicing good deeds.

Mari: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

III – Teneal chose Revelation 2:10: “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

One of the questions the three will answer before being confirmed is: *Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?* – It is a hard question and answer. How many were confirmed and have broken this promise, going astray from the church? We are not suffering open persecution due to our faith, as it happens in some countries. We don't need to choose between life and death because of our Christian faith. Why are so many going astray, following their own heart and the temptations of this world? They are not faithful to God and will suffer the consequences of their acts.

Jesus made a big promise in this text: “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” The Christians were suffering hard persecution when the Apostle John wrote Revelation. They must have been sure that even if they lost their lives, the eternal life was guaranteed to all who remained faithful.

Teneal told me that her mother would give her a Confirmation gift: A ring with a crown. This will remind her of this Bible verse.

Teneal: “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life,” is the promise of Jesus to you.

Conclusion: The Confirmation Rite is always a good opportunity for all of us to renew our vows before God together with the girls. If you are steadfast, God will strengthen you. If you are far, come back with a repentant and trustful heart, like the Prodigal Son; God is waiting for you. If you are in doubt: Search for the truth in the Bible and be strengthened in the fellowship of the church. God is faithful and His Covenant in Jesus will never be broken. Amen.

