

LESSON FIFTEENTH.

ON CONFIRMATION.

166 Q. What is confirmation?

A. Confirmation is a sacrament through which we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

IN baptism we are made Christians, but we are not very strong in our faith till the Holy Ghost comes in confirmation. You remember how timid the apostles were before the coming of the Holy Ghost, and how firm and determined in their faith they were afterwards; and how fearlessly they preached even to those who crucified Our Lord. "**Soldiers,**" because we must fight for our salvation against our three enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. Our Lord is our great leader in this warfare, and we must follow Him and fight as He directs. A soldier that fights as he pleases and not as his general commands, will surely be beaten.

167 Q. Who can administer confirmation?

A. The bishop is the ordinary minister of confirmation.

"**Ordinary,**" because in some very distant countries where on account of the small number of Christians they have as yet no bishops, the Pope allows some priest to give confirmation; but then he must use the holy oil consecrated by a bishop, and cannot consecrate oil himself.

168 Q. How does the bishop give confirmation?

A. The bishop extends his hands over those who are to be confirmed, prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost, and anoints the forehead of each with holy chrism in the form of a cross.

\* 169 Q. What is holy chrism?

A. Holy chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balm, consecrated by the bishop.

The oil signifies the strength we receive, and the balm that we should be free from the corruption of sin, and give forth the sweetness of virtue.

170 Q. What does the bishop say in anointing the person he confirms?

A. In anointing the person he confirms the bishop says: I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

\* 171 Q. What is meant by anointing the forehead with chrism in the form of a cross?

A. By anointing the forehead with chrism in the form of a cross is meant, that the Christian who is confirmed must openly profess and practise his faith, never be ashamed of it, and rather die than deny it.

“Openly profess”—that is, acknowledge that he is a Catholic when it is necessary to do so. He need not proclaim it in the streets. “Practise” it without regard for what other people think, say, or do. “Ashamed” of a religion so glorious as the Catholic religion? Would we not be proud to belong to a society of which kings and princes were members? Well, a few centuries ago nearly all the kings, princes, and great men of the earth were Catholics. All the saints were Catholics. All the popes were Catholics. At present over two hundred million people in the world are Catholics. This Church was founded when Christ Our Lord was on earth, and is nearly two thousand years old. All the other churches are only a few hundred years old. We ought, therefore, to be proud of our religion, for which and in which so many noble persons died. We should feel proud that we are Catholics; while Protestants should feel ashamed in our presence, for they have deserted the true standard of Christ, and followed some other leader who set up a religion of his own in opposition to the true Church of Our Lord. They will not have the cross or crucifix, the standard of Christ, in their churches or houses or about their persons, and yet they claim to be Christians redeemed by the cross. We are called

upon to defend or profess our religion when we have to do what the Church and God require us to do: for example, hear Mass on Sundays and holy-days; abstain from the use of flesh-meat on Fridays, fast-days, and the like, when we are among persons not Catholics.

\* 172 Q. Why does the bishop give the person he confirms a slight blow on the cheek?

A. The bishop gives the person he confirms a slight blow on the cheek to put him in mind that he must be ready to suffer everything, even death, for the sake of Christ.

173 Q. To receive confirmation worthily is it necessary to be in the state of grace?

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\* 174 Q. What special preparation should be made to receive confirmation?

A. Persons of an age to learn should know the chief mysteries of faith and the duties of a Christian, and be instructed in the nature and effects of this sacrament.

How can one be a good soldier who does not know the rules and regulations of the army nor understand the commands of his general? How can one be a good Christian who does not understand the laws of the Church and the teachings of Christ? The "nature"—that is, understand the sacrament itself. "Effects"—that is, what it does in our souls.

175 Q. Is it a sin to neglect confirmation?

A. It is a sin to neglect confirmation, especially in these evil days when faith and morals are exposed to so many and such violent temptations.

"Temptations"—from the sayings and writings of the enemies of religion. To neglect it when we have an opportunity of receiving it without any very great difficulty would be a sin. When persons have been unfortunate enough to grow up without confirmation, they should come at any time in their lives to receive it, and not be ashamed to do so on account of their age or condition in life.