

Renewing And Confirming Your Baptismal Covenant.

Text: 2 Cor 5:15

Suggested Hymns:

301, 273, 341, 368, 296, 282, 352

1) You Confess Anew Your Faith In Jesus Christ
And His Atoning Work

2) Rededicate Yourself Entirely In Service To Christ
And His Cause

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Corinthians 5:15, ¹⁵ ***He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are assembled in the house of God for a confirmation service. What is meant by a confirmation service? I fear that the rite of confirmation is frequently misunderstood not only by people who have no connection at all with the Church, but also by the members of the Church themselves.

Here are some of the wrong views of a confirmation Service. Firstly, there are those people who look at confirmation as a sort of spiritual immunisation which is expected to immunise the person against each and every spiritual sickness. The person is regarded as absolutely safe against Satan and hell, regardless of what attitude he takes towards Christ and His Church after confirmation. Such a person considers himself a member of the Kingdom and an unfailing heir of life everlasting. But nothing could be further from the truth. We are told in 1 Timothy 6:12 to ¹² ***Fight the good fight of faith.***

Secondly, then there are those people who look upon confirmation as a sort of graduation. A course prescribed by the Church has been completed, and in a festive ceremony the confirmation certificate is awarded in recognition of the completion of this course, and parents and pupils are happy that the end finally has come.

Sadly, when you glance through lists of former confirmation classes in most churches, you will find that there are some who regard confirmation as a graduation from the Church, and bid farewell to their church.

Now for the right view of a Confirmation Service. Just exactly what is meant by a confirmation service? What does it mean when we say, “*This person is to be confirmed?*” Strictly speaking Joanna is not to be confirmed, but rather she herself will do the confirming. She is to confirm with her own lips the covenant which her sponsors made with God in Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism is, as we read in Titus 3:5-7, *the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Through this Sacrament God works faith in little children, receives them into the covenant and Kingdom of Grace, and makes them members of Christ’s Church and temples of His Holy Spirit.

But that does not end the matter. The Saviour’s command includes the direction to teach them *to observe all things that I have commanded you.*¹ In accordance with this command children are instructed in the Christian faith.

This is done first of all by their parents, to whom the Lord has issued the command to *“Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*² The Church assists the parents in this important and God-pleasing work of Christian education. Some congregations are able to offer to the children a Christian day school, where not only the fundamentals of the Christian faith are thoroughly taught, but where all other subjects are taught with the Christian understanding of life.

The Sunday school also is designed to help parents in the glorious task of teaching children the meaning of that gracious covenant made by them with God in Holy Baptism.

And let us not overlook the Divine Worship Service. That must always remain supreme. In a Divine Service there is not only the element of instruction, but also of inspiration. Worship and communing with God in prayer and song are prominent, all of which are essential for teaching the child in the way of the

Lord. Parents, bring your children to church every Sunday! God will bless you and your children through it.

In addition to the agencies mentioned, the Lutheran Church provides special confirmation instructions, in which the chief parts of Christian doctrine are taught and expounded. Confirmation means “*make firm.*”

When the children reach an age of discretion and understand the covenant entered into by them by the grace of God in Holy Baptism, they should daily give their hearts to God and let their eyes observe His ways. In particular, being able to examine themselves and to discern the Lord’s body, they should for their growth in grace receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion with the Church of God.

To encourage such growth in Christian knowledge and faith, the rite of confirmation is maintained in the Church. The catechumens publicly make profession of the true faith and pledge themselves anew to the covenant made between them and God.

The Christian congregation, having assured itself that the catechumens possess sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine to enable them to partake worthily of the Lord’s Supper, invites them to the Holy Communion and, with the laying on of hands, prays over them for the Holy Spirit of God, that they may grow in grace, be steadfast and unmovable in their profession, become fruitful in every good work, and in the end receive the crown of life.

In order to give Joanna an opportunity to renew her baptismal covenant, this solemn and festive Confirmation Service has been arranged. She has been lead to God’s altar that she might, in the presence of the entire congregation, *Renew and Confirm Her Baptismal Covenant.* May the Lord bless our meditation as we consider what this means for us.

1. Renewing And Confirming Your Baptismal Covenant Means That

You Confess Anew Your Faith In Jesus Christ And His Atoning Work

Our text says *He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.* Two great truths are mentioned in this text with reference to Jesus Christ. Firstly, Jesus died and

secondly, Jesus rose again. These are two unalterable, well-established, historic facts.

Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross of Calvary under the governorship of Pontius Pilate, but on the third day He rose victoriously from the Garden tomb into which His body had been laid in the evening of that now memorable Good Friday. These are facts of history that cannot be disproved.

The public preaching of these facts began at Jerusalem fifty days after they had come to pass, and that preaching has continued in the world ever since. For over twenty centuries these two fundamental truths of the Christian religion have been repeated in more languages than any other fact or facts of secular history.

People have used every means at their disposal to wipe out the remembrance of these facts. For example, Voltaire, the unscrupulous scoffer of France, claimed that he would exterminate the religion about Christ and predicted that a hundred years after his death that the Bible would no longer be read. The time given for the utter collapse of Christianity has elapsed more than eight centuries ago!

The writings of Voltaire have become almost extinct, but since the invention of the printing press, the Bible or parts thereof, have been circulated in millions and millions of copies. The preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is still going on and will continue to go on until the end of time.

The Christian religion stands on a Rock against which even the gates of hell shall not prevail, and that Rock is Jesus Christ, who died and rose again. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only well-established historic facts, but they constitute the two most important and the two most precious truths of the entire Bible.

And what makes these truths so important, so memorable, and so precious? The Apostle gives us the reason in two little words, two monosyllables: "**For all.**" Yes, Christ "**died for all.**" Jesus Christ did not die for the same reason for which the children of men must die.

You and I must die because *the wages of sin is death*,³ but Jesus Christ did not sin. Rather, He died to pay the penalty of our sins. He died for others, not Himself. Not only that, "**He died for all.**" None are excluded. These words "**for all**" must make us more certain that Christ died also for us than if our names

were recorded here. ***“For all,”*** that must include you and me. Scripture says, ***the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***⁴

And this Jesus, who died to pay the wages of our sins, rose again, and therein lies the absolute proof that by His death our sins are atoned for and will be remembered no more against us by the holy and righteous God; for ***“Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”***⁵

Christ’s resurrection from the dead proves that the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world. In the resurrection of Christ we have heaven’s guarantee of pardon and peace, life and salvation.

This, then, is the chief thing that we are to believe, and believe steadfastly: *Because Jesus Christ died for my sins, rose again, and was glorified by the Father, therefore, believing in Him, I have through Him the free and full forgiveness of all my sins.*

Or as we learnt in Confirmation Class, *I am forgiven, justified, and saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, without works, for Christ’s sake.*⁶

Therefore when my last hour draws near and I must leave the scenes of this earth, my soul will not go into everlasting darkness, but will be ushered into the heavenly home. On the great day of resurrection my body will be reunited with the soul and glorified, and thus I shall live in endless bliss with my Redeemer forever and ever.

All this is most beautifully expressed in the explanation of the Second Article, which in your confirmation instruction you have learned to say from memory. *I believe that Jesus Christ - true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary - is my Lord.*

At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Joanna, always continue in the faith of these truths. This is not a confession which is popular in our day. In fact, this is a doctrine that has never been popular with natural man. Already in the days of St. Paul there were those who perverted the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

You see, people do not want to despair of their own righteousness. They do not want to hear that in the eyes of God they are unworthy and that they cannot do anything towards procuring the favour of God whose every commandment they have flagrantly transgressed.

Rather, people want to work out their own salvation, claiming that this is an improvement over the old plan of salvation, that of faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, for the sins of the whole world.

But such a perversion of the Gospel of Salvation is inspired by the devil, who knows all too well that if he can succeed in getting people to trust in their own merits, he has them securely in his clutches; for man's *righteousnesses are like filthy rags*.⁸ Hence, no matter what others may say to the contrary, abide in the faith by which you say:⁹

Abiding, steadfast, firm, and sure,
The teachings of the Word endure;
Blest he who trusts this steadfast Word,
His anchor holds in Christ the Lord.

2. Renewing And Confirming Your Baptismal Covenant Means That

You Rededicate Yourself Entirely In Service To Christ And His Cause

Receiving Christ Jesus as your one and only Redeemer and always remembering what He has done for you, you then should dedicate yourselves entirely in service to Him and His cause. Our text reads, *He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

It is natural for people to seek their own gain, their own advancement, their own enjoyment, and their own honour. This is substantiated by Scripture as well as by experience. St. Paul writes in Philippians 2:21, ²¹ *For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.* But Christians should overcome this

selfishness; they should not live to themselves, but to Jesus who died for us and rose again.

What does it mean to live for Christ? No better example can be given to you to illustrate what it means to live for Christ than the life of St. Paul after his conversion. His motto was, ^{“21} *For to me, to live is Christ.*”¹⁰ ^{“20} *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*¹¹

And we read in Philippians 3:7-8, ⁷ *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.* ⁸ *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Living for Christ means surrendering ourselves with all that we are and have to our blessed Redeemer and His cause. It means rising above the transient and fleeting things of this life and coming into a holy and intimate relation with our Lord and King.

Living for Christ means never giving up your Christian faith. We read in Revelation 2:10, *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.* And in Revelation 3:11, *Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.* This means a battle. A battle against the devil, the world and our sinful self. If a person stops fighting this spiritual battle he has ceased to be a Christian. The hymnist writes, *Fight the good fight with all thy might.*¹²

So today the Lord directs Himself in a special way to you, Joanna, as well as to everyone assembled at this solemn service, and asks: *“Will you live entirely for Me, who died for you and rose again?”* May it be our sincere resolve as we answer in the words of our confirmation vow, *“Yes, I do so intend, with the help of God”!*

May we go out in the strength which God supplies, pledging ourselves in unswerving allegiance to Christ and His cause. Let us strive to be outstanding Christians, determined followers of the crucified but now glorified Lord, before whom even the world will stop in awe on the Last Day.

Let us always be mindful of the words of the Apostle in our text, “***He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.***” Let us declare in the words of the hymnist, *Thou didst give Thyself for me, Now I give myself to Thee.*¹³

But where, where are you and I to receive strength to carry out such a holy resolution? Is there a place where we can go and obtain the necessary power to tear us away from our selfish and self-centred existence, to tear us away from ourselves, and bring us into consecrated fellowship with Christ?

Thank God, there is a place! Where? Go often in spirit to Calvary’s heights, to the foot of the Cross. Fasten your eyes upon the blessed Redeemer stretched out upon the tree of shame, suffering for the sins of humanity, for your sins and my sins.

Then as you stand there in holy awe and adoration, be mindful of the words of St. Paul with reference to Jesus, “***who loved me and gave Himself for me.***”¹⁴

So Joanna, may the Holy Spirit give you the strength and help you need to carry out the promises you will make today.

Let us conclude with they hymnist,¹⁵

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 28:20

² Ephesians 6:4

³ Romans 6:23

⁴ Isaiah 53:6

⁵ Romans 4:25

⁶ Lesson 18

⁷ Gal. 1:7-9

⁸ Isaiah 64:6

⁹ Hymn 273

¹⁰ Philippians 1:21

¹¹ Galatians 2:20

¹² Hymn 352, 1 Timothy 6:12

¹³ Hymn 51

¹⁴ Galatians 2:20

¹⁵ Hymn 368