**Pentecost Sunday – Year C – May 19, 2013 – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on John 15:26,27 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Confirmation Sunday – Isaac Nichols, Megan Reynolds, Elizabeth Fullen, Christian Stover, Molly Skinner**

**“You would not be here… if not for the work of the Holy Spirit.”**

*"When the Counselor* *comes, whom I will send to you from the Father,* *the Spirit of truth* *who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.* *27 And you also must testify,* *for you have been with me from the beginning.”*

Christian, Molly, Elizabeth, Isaac, and Megan… here you are! You have new dresses, new shirt and tie, wearing your white robes and beautiful corsages. Your parents, friends and family are here. You are seated in the VIP seats. Your names are even on the marquee in front of church! How often does that happen? You might be tempted to think that today is all about you, but it’s not. If you notice our banner hanging there, depicts the Holy Spirit… and there on our stained glass, the Holy Spirit… and on the front cover of the bulletin, the Holy Spirit. Today is not only your Confirmation Day, but it is also the day of Pentecost in the Christian Church year calendar. Very appropriate, don’t you think, that we celebrate Pentecost today, when we focus on the work and power of the Holy Spirit on your confirmation day?

You would not be here today if not for the work of the Holy Spirit. You have learned through your instruction in the Word of God that from conception you inherited a sinful nature from your parents. Which means that even before you came out of your mother’s womb you were under God’s wrath. And when you were born and family members were cooing and ogling over you, God’s wrath still burned against you because you were not holy and innocent and free from sin. You were by nature, dead spiritually, with no free will or desire to love God or choose his Son Jesus as your Savior.

But you also learned in catechism instruction, that here in the waters of Baptism the Holy Spirit did his work on you and in you. In Baptism the Holy Spirit made you alive. He washed away your sins. Because Baptism is not just plain water, but water used at God’s command and connected with God’s Word. Wherever the Word of God is, there the Holy Spirit does his work. Through baptism he washed away your sin, he rescued you from death and the devil and gave you eternal life. Through baptism the Holy Spirit made you alive spiritually. He brought you from unbelief to belief. He planted the seed of faith in your heart at baptism, and now by God’s grace, by faith, you believe that Jesus is your Savior.

You would not be here today if not for the work of the Holy Spirit. Today, you are making a confession of faith, the most important confession you will come from your lips. Today you will confess that in Baptism, God forgave you of your sins, and gave you the gift of eternal life, you would not be able to make that confession of faith without the Holy Spirit convincing you of that truth. Today you will also make a promise, the most important promise you will ever make, that you will continue in this faith in Christ, you will reject all false doctrine, you will promise that your faith in Christ is more important than even your own life, that you will endure all things, persecution, even death, rather than fall away from faith. You are not able to make that promise without the Holy Spirit working in you the desire and the will to make that promise.

And what about keeping that promise? How will you keep this commitment to remain steadfast in the true faith? How will reject false teachings and the devil’s lies? You are facing the same world that the disciples faced when Jesus spoke to them the words from John chapter 15, your sermon lesson this morning. Jesus spoke those words the night he was betrayed. That next morning he would be crucified and that afternoon die and be buried in a tomb. He asked his disciples, “If this is what they will do to me, what will they do to you?” The world will hate you because of me. Unbelievers will question your faith. They will attack the truths of the Bible and promote false doctrine. They will convince the governments of the world to arrest you and have you thrown into prison where you will be tortured and murdered.

It would be wrong of me to say, “This is the world that you will be stepping into.” You are already in it. The truths of the Bible that you confess to be inspired by God as the only absolute truth in the world… your friends, classmates and teachers already challenge, and promote other ideas as truth. And it will continue throughout your life. When you get to high school, college and graduate school, your professors and teachers will call you ignorant because you are a confessing Christian. They will laugh at you because you believe that dinosaurs roamed the earth with Adam and Eve. They will laugh at you and say that death is not a cause of sin, just the process of natural selection. Your friends will offer alternative beliefs. You will have a girlfriend or boyfriend who will think that sex is to be enjoyed by anyone, and not a special gift given by God to be reserved for marriage. A friend will accuse you of being a bigot and unloving because you believe that God’s institution of marriage between one man and one woman still stands. Coworkers will argue with you that there are many paths to heaven and that we’re all just trying to get there however we can and will call you close-minded because you still stand on the truth that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. I can say that these things will happen, because if you ask any of the adults seated here today, they will tell you that this is the world they face every day.

The other challenge you face is Satan. Satan will try to do one of two things: he will try to convince you that you’re a pretty good person, that you don’t sin all that much, you try harder than most people to do what God wants you to, you put forth your best effort, and that’s good enough for God. If he can convince you of that, then you don’t need a Savior. You are your own savior. On the other hand, Satan will do everything he can to convince you that you’re a pretty rotten person. He’ll remind you of your past sins and say that they are too great, and that God would never love you because of what you’ve done, and that the only thing waiting for you when you die is God’s punishment.

How will you keep the promise? How will you remain faithful to your commitment today? I’m sure the disciples thought the same thing when Jesus told them that the world would hate them because they professed to be his disciples. My dear children, listen to Jesus’ promise, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to be your Counselor. The Greek word for this title means “someone who is called to stand next to you and to help and comfort you when you’re in trouble.” Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to counsel you, to help you, to comfort you.

This counselor is “the Spirit of truth” as Jesus said. And the Spirit of truth “will testify about me”, Jesus continued. When Satan tempts you to doubt God’s love because of the awful things you have said and done and thought, the Holy Spirit will preach a sermon to you. The words of that sermon are the words you have heard preached from this pulpit, taught in catechism, studied on your own at home, and the words of that sermon will always testify about Jesus. The Holy Spirit will say to you, “Yes, your sins are great. But Jesus’ love for you is greater!” The Holy Spirit will point you to Jesus and remind you that out of his great love, he came down from heaven, took on human flesh, faced every single one of Satan’s temptations and defeated them, for you! The Holy Spirit will point you to Jesus and his great love for you that moved him to go to the cross and suffer the wrath of God for you, to take your punishment, and to die. The Holy Spirit will remind you that Jesus defeated death and rose from his grave for you, and then declared you not guilty of your sins. Because of his great love for you Jesus made sure that your parents or grandparents brought you to this baptismal font, so that the Holy Spirit would plant the seed of faith in your heart, and that faith, through baptism, received the washing away of sins, that through faith, you are God’s child, through faith, you have escaped the fires of hell and already possess the inheritance of heaven as God’s child. This is the truth the Holy Spirit, your counselor will remind you of all the days of your life.

And when professors and teachers and classmates say, “But what about this? Doesn’t this make more sense? Doesn’t this seem more logical?” When the sinful world with its human reason and lies tempts you to abandon the faith you here profess, and take the easy way out, the Holy Spirit will remind you of the truths you learned in catechism, the truths preached from this pulpit, the truths you learned at home in your own Bible study, and you will boldly say, “But God’s Almighty unchanging Word says this, and this is truth, and this does not change, and his Word I stand.” You will be so bold to say that, because Jesus said, “You also must testify.” You will confess Jesus, you will proclaim his Word, because the Holy Spirit will enable you to do it. Jesus promised it.

You would not be here today without the work of the Holy Spirit. You will not be able to stand through the rest of your life without the work of the Holy Spirit. In your years of Christian education you have learned that the Holy Spirit works through the gospel in Word and Sacraments. That Word of God will part of your life every day. You will study it every day for yourself. The congregation wants to make sure that the Word of God will be part of your life. Today we will present you with a gift: a plaque with your confirmation passage on it. Every day you will see that passage on your dresser or hanging on your wall, and you will eventually take that Word to heart. Through that Word of God the Holy Spirit will remind you of God’s promise, and through it you will be strengthened to face a world that hates you.

In a few moments you will receive your Lord’s body and blood with bread and wine, for the forgiveness of your sins, for the gift of eternal life in heaven, and you will be strengthened through it. You will be empowered to stand firm in the face of a world that will hate you. You will stand at the altar as often as it is offered, so that the Holy Spirit may do his work in you, to comfort and help you.

One day, God willing, you will stand before this altar to ask God’s blessing on your marriage, and your pastor will preach a sermon based on your confirmation verse. The Holy Spirit will strengthen you and your spouse as you build a marriage on the foundation of God’s Word. If God blesses you with a child, you will bring that child to this baptismal font, and trust that the Holy Spirit will bring life and forgiveness and salvation to your child, just as he did for you. And when that child grows you will make the sacrifice of your time to bring that child to church, to Sunday school, to catechism, so that one day you might sit where your parents are seated, thanking God the Holy Spirit that he has been your Counselor and Helper. When God calls you home to heaven, your pastor will preach your funeral sermon based on your confirmation verse. You might be tempted to think that day will be all about you. But it will not. The pastor will not preach about what a great person you were, but he will say to your family and friends, “Your loved one would not be in heaven today, if not for the work of the Holy Spirit. Praise God that they were baptized, that they were confirmed and that the Holy Spirit did his work on your loved one until the day they went to heaven! When Jesus comes, he will raise this dead body to live forever.”

You might be tempted to believe that today is all about you, but it is not. It is about the Holy Spirit and the work he began in you at your baptism, the work he continues to do today through his Word and the Lord’s Supper, and the work he will continue to do until he takes you home to heaven. My dear children: Christian, Molly, Megan, Isaac and Elizabeth, I pray that you never reject the Holy Spirit, but remain in your baptismal grace and keep your faith firmly planted in Jesus. Amen.