

October 2017

The Rector writes:

‘SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE - Confirmation’



I was thirteen years old when my dad delivered an invitation to attend confirmation classes run by our curate – to learn the ‘catechism’ (a statement about our faith, comprising the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and Holy Communion). I suppose a few folk might remember having to learn all these things by heart! Thankfully I only needed to learn about them, and I confess I found the lectures we were given about them both boring and confusing.

So it was with a mixture of Excitement and trepidation that on my 14th birthday I knelt before the Bishop of Coventry in my parish church to receive the gift of Confirmation.

But I do remember one thing that Bishop Cuthbert Bardsley said in his sermon at my Confirmation – ‘years ago you began two wonderful journeys – the first was the exciting journey of life itself, the other was a journey of faith at which promises were made on your behalf that you would make your life journey in the company of and following the teachings of Jesus Christ and his church – today you are taking the next step of that journey by deciding for yourself that this is what you want to do. But never forget that this wonderful journey will go on and on, with its ups and downs and who knows where it may lead you.’

At the time I never dreamed just what the invocation of the Holy Spirit as the Bishop pressed hard down on my head would lead to – and my journey from then to now has certainly been interesting and varied –at times dark and difficult at others truly joyous and wonderful.

So what is Confirmation about and why should we celebrate it?

Many in the church today think that Confirmation is unnecessary, and especially so when Baptism is made when we are adult. Yet the Church

of England still requires both. Part of the reason is that in the early days of the church Baptism was carried out only when the Bishop visited the church on the great festival days – then as more and more infant baptisms took place they were carried out by the local priest and the bishop came to confirm that act at a later date. Today the majority of baptisms in our church are of babies and young children, who are too young to understand what is happening to them. We therefore offer Confirmation from the age of 12 upwards, when the candidates can have some understanding about what they are doing. These candidates must not worry that they do not know everything – even your Rector was perhaps too young to understand fully what he was doing, and later strayed from the Lord for a while, and he is still learning on his journey fifty-two years after it began.

This month Bishop James is coming to Confirm a group of 6 adults and 5 young people from our church family. This will be the first Confirmation at St Martin's for several years. Please do pray for the candidates, better still come along and support them in the service on 8th October at 10.00am.

To confirm something – means saying 'YES'. At Confirmation we are saying 'YES' to Jesus' call to follow him on our journey through life. This really is something to celebrate! But it is a big and important decision, and that is why we need to spend time in training before we are confirmed – just like an athlete training for the Olympics we need to prepare ourselves for the Christian journey if we are to do it well. Our candidates spent an intensive day in training recently and are ready to move on into full Communion in the Church of England.

Saying YES to Jesus, and allowing God's Holy Spirit into your life – that really is something to celebrate.

Yours in Christ,
Reverend John