

Pentecost 2021

1. Almost 200 years ago, on October 25, 1834, what is about to happen to our seminarians Joseph, Len and Ben, happened to the 8 year old Giovanni Battista Mazzucconi (1826-1855). He received the Sacrament of Confirmation. On that day he chose to be led by the Spirit! He said “Yes” to the Holy Spirit of the Father! The Holy Spirit came into his life and never left him, not even at the moment of death. He loved Giovanni Battista without end. **Here is what Giovanni Battista wrote as a priest on the eve of his death, though he did not know it was just around the corner. He was then 29:**

2. “I do not know what He is preparing for me in the journey I begin tomorrow. I know one thing only, if He is good and loves me immensely, everything else – calm or storm, danger or safety, life or death, are merely changeable and passing expressions of the beloved immutable, eternal Love. Yes, my beloved brethren, we have another country, another home, a kingdom where we must all meet, where there will no longer be separations or departures, where past sorrows and danger will merely serve to increase our consolation and glory.”¹ **Confirmation begins your public journey of being directed by the Spirit of Pentecost!**

3. After the homily, I will ask you to make your profession of faith. If you really want to receive the Holy Spirit, then you must renounce everything that is opposed to God. Without faith nobody can receive the sacraments of Jesus Christ. (*Youcat: Confirmation Book, #203*)

4. At one point, I will ask you if you are really serious about the Church: “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit..., the Holy Catholic Church,...etc?”

5. Then I will confirm your profession: “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Jesus Christ our Lord.” Confirmation equips you for public witness to the faith and to the Catholic Church!

6. After that I will ask everyone to kneel as we pray silently and intensely in our hearts that the Lord may send his Holy Spirit upon you: “Dearly beloved, let us pray to God the almighty Father, for these, his adopted sons, etc.”

7. After this I will stand and extend my hands over you, giving voice to the prayer of all of us present: “Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought these your servants to new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, freeing them from sin: Send upon them, O Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete...etc.”

8. Then follows the actual anointing. Why do we anoint you again? You were already anointed at Baptism! Because it marks a special stage of the power and working of the Holy Spirit in your life. It means that the Spirit is now given to you as young adults, who can respond to him with **the new responsibility of spreading the “fragrance of the knowledge of Christ” (cf, 2 Cor 2:14), namely, the gospel, to all the world.**

9. Then you come forward to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit? It means being permanently “marked as a bearer of the Holy

¹ “Blessed Giovanni Battista Mazzucconi”. CatholicSaints.Info. 8 September 2017. Web. 7 June 2021. <<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-giovanni-battista-mazzucconi/>>

Spirit...; [it] means being set on fire with the love of God...; [it] means being refreshed by the beauty of the Lord's plan for you and for the world...; [it] means becoming a source of spiritual refreshment for others...; [it] means not being afraid to stand up for Christ and letting the truth of the Gospel permeate **the way we see, think, and act, as we work for the triumph of the civilization of love.**"²

10. Giovanni Battista's adult life in the Seminary was marked by a gentleness, generosity, readiness to forgiveness of everyone, and a special devotion to the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin. He used to share so often the words, "I cannot do without the memory of heaven," that his spiritual director had to prohibit him from speaking or thinking of it any further!³ It is an example of letting the **"the truth of the Gospel permeate the way we see, think, and act."**

11. Confirmation gives you especially an ecclesial spirit: to believe and love all that the Church believes and loves. At one retreat, Giovanni Battista listened to a missionary priest who had just returned from India and was moved to cultivate a desire to be a missionary. Later in 1850 when St. Pius IX established the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (aka PIME), **Giovanni Battista asked to join them.** Within two years they were on their way to New Guinea. It was on his arrival at the Island of Woodlark, a mission that had been abandoned, but which due to slow communication, he did not know, that the natives met him and **one of them pretending to greet him in a friendly manner, sank his hatchet into his skull.**

² Benedict XVI, "Homily on the Occasion of the 23rd World Youth Day", Sydney, Australia. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080720_xxiii-wyd.html. June 7, 2021

12. To your anointing you reply, "Amen!" meaning "Yes, so be it"! "I want this, I agree to this with my whole heart!" And so you are strengthened to bear witness to Christ. Your sponsor who stands beside you, is one who also says "Yes!" to your yes and "Amen!" to your Amen not so much with words but with his or her life. **May you match the yes of Jesus in the Eucharist with your "Yes!"**

³ "First Martyr of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13 February 1984, 4.