

In 2008, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI travelled to Australia for the 23rd World Youth Day. The theme that was reflected upon throughout the weeklong youth festival was, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses.” In his message preparing the faithful who would make the long journey to Sydney, Benedict reflects on the theme by writing, “It is particularly necessary to rediscover the sacrament of Confirmation and its important place in our spiritual growth.” Following this world youth day, many resources have been developed or revamped in order to rediscover the importance of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the spiritual growth of the faithful through proper Sacramental preparation. The Archdiocese of Toronto has developed a resource called “Anointed for Mission”, which I think in the title itself clearly outlines the essence, the substance of what the Sacrament of Confirmation is, and why Our Lord instituted it for us and our salvation. The Sacrament of Confirmation is when we are given a special outpouring of the the Holy Spirit like the Apostles on the day of Pentecost...anointed with Sacred Chrism...with the oil of Christ to live out our Baptismal dignity as children of God...to live the mission that has been given to all the Christian faithful. Our whole life then, as Christians, is to live the mission that Christ has given to us from the moment of our baptism - strengthened...anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Confirmation makes us intimately aware that we belong fully to the Church and that we are working together in solidarity to carry out the mission that Christ has given to us. Each of us has been anointed for a mission that Our Lord has called us to. Each mission...each task will be different as God has planned according to the gifts that we have received. But each individual mission that is carried out works towards the one mission of Jesus Christ...the mission that Jesus gave to the Church: to bring God’s love...to bring God’s peace...to bring God’s forgiveness into the world by helping others encounter and enter into a friendship with the risen Lord.

Since it is probably on most people’s minds...I will use the example of the Toronto Raptors to illustrate this need of teamwork...of solidarity. Each player on that team has different skills, different gifts...different qualities of play...but they work together...their defence was strong because they worked as a unit. Their offence, though weak in the first half, flourished in the second because they began to work with each other’s strengths to offset their weaknesses. The Raptors have a mission to win the game and ultimately to win a Championship.

In order to be successful in this task to win, these players are committed to each other...and committed to their training. We too, if we are to be successful in the mission that has been given to us by Our Lord, are to be committed Catholics. This starts with our own relationship with Jesus Christ. When we come to know Jesus personally and experience His love for us, we will desire to grow closer to Him. As we grow closer to Jesus in love, our love for the Church and her mission will also grow. We will want others to experience the same love and are motivated to share the love of Jesus with them.

For us to do this well, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. We need the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit to be unleashed in our lives so that we can be the missionary disciples that God is calling us to be because the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of the mission.

In the same message for World Youth Day in 2008, Benedict expresses his desire for a new Pentecost in the Church...a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful. My dear young people, you are the beginning of this new Pentecost. You must harness the power of the Holy Spirit being poured out for you in this Sacrament and not be afraid of the mission that the Lord is asking of you. With all your joy, with all your youthful energy, Go...get out there...and as it was written on the whiteboard of the Raptors dressing room, so I say to you...let it rip and live the mission that you are being sent for.