

Durango Deanery Youth prepare for Confirmation during annual retreat

DURANGO - Today's Confirmation candidates probably have a better sense of Christian identity than any recent generation.

Young people today are ready to stand before a representative of the larger Church—the bishop or his delegate—and be anointed with the perfumed oil (chrism) blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. They can say with knowledge they lacked as newly baptized infants, “Yes, this is my Church. I accept the faith of this Church as my faith. This is who I am.”

Sixty-five high school youth traveled from across the Durango Deanery to Sonlight Christian Camp in Pagosa Springs for the annual Confirmation retreat. The group consisted of youth from Durango, Ignacio, Pagosa, Mancos, Dolores and Cortez.

The two-day event held the weekend of January 26-28, featured Rob Plush of the Diocese of Colorado Springs as the retreat team leader.

“Plush encouraged and inspired our youth and confirmation candidates,” said Mary Therese Ralph of St. Columba Catholic Church and Coordinator of the Durango Deanery.

The *Catechism* describes Confirmation as a deepening of baptismal gifts. It says that the sacrament roots us more deeply in our identity as God's children; unites us more firmly with Christ; increases in us the gifts of the Holy Spirit; binds us more closely to the Church; and gives us special strength to bear witness to our faith (see #1303).

Preparation for Confirmation includes learning to articulate what it means to be a Catholic Christian: the faith we express in Creed and lifestyle.

The retreat schedule included viewing the movie “Rudy” and reflecting on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the challenges of discipleship to the character and experiences of Rudy.

In addition, the days were filled with presentations, small group discussion, testimonies, journaling and prayer experiences. The culmination was a candle-



light commissioning ceremony followed by the sacrament of reconciliation and Mass.

“We are keenly aware of the need for the Spirit's gifts among our young people, very early in life, as they face grave temptations and severe obstacles to the practice of their faith,” Plush said. “The gifts help them live their faith with courage and joy.”

Like the rest of us, today's Confirmation candidate will continue to search for a better sense of divine reality until the day when eternal light explodes on newly opened eyes on the other side of the grave. Pledging faith to God is more a lifetime effort than a one-time action.

Confirmation, like the other sacraments of initiation, marks the beginning of a journey toward deeper

knowledge of God.

“Our Confirmation candidates join us in claiming our heritage,” said Ralph. “For years to come, they will bear witness to what loving and believing people have handed on to them—all in the Spirit of God.”



Clockwise: Each small group presented a summary of their discussion to the larger gathering. Music was provided by the Immaculate Heart of Mary Life Team Music Group from Pagosa Springs. Rob Plush, retreat team leader, facilitated the discussion on the Gifts of the Spirit evident in the movie “Rudy.”



John Findlater, center, poses with the principal, teachers and staff of St. Columba.

St. Columba School Hosts National Speaker

By Kathrene Frautschy, Director of Development, St. Columba School
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE OF CATHOLIC LIFE

DURANGO- St. Columba School hosted nationally recognized speaker John Findlater for parent and faculty sessions April 19–20. Findlater arrived direct from speaking at the annual National Catholic Education Association, to the delight of both audiences.

For the parent gathering Findlater framed his remarks within the context of contemporary theologians. He used examples from Catholic family history in contrast to the trends of popular secular behaviors which challenge Catholic parents and families today.

Findlater defined great parenting as not about being perfect, but rather about being a great leader...a parent who articulates a vision and through modeling behavior, leads the vision. He offered parents the idea of creating a lesson plan for their family life.

To solidify their family specific components of the lesson plan, Findlater asked parents to consider concepts which are non-negotiable vs. negotiable juxtaposed against the rightness of such things as authority vs. negotiation, virtues vs. values, delayed vs. instant, and sacrifice vs. egoism. Through marvelous stories, solid theology, humor and an expressive voice and visage, Findlater captivated the parents who applauded his firm, loving and affirm-

ing insights.

Gathered with School faculty, members of the parish staff and religious education teachers, Findlater added song to his notable public speaking repertoire. As a Catholic School teacher and administrator, he spoke heart to heart with those assembled, challenging them to reflect on the changed demographics in American homes and the impact that has on Catholic classrooms.

He explored with the faculty the God inspired, graced, noteworthy role each of them plays daily in the lives of the children entrusted to them, by calling to mind the prophetic time in history within which God has placed each of them.

In that framework he reviewed the time-tried and successfully tested expectations of Catholic education and the uniqueness of the opportunities within Catholic education. He stressed to the faculty the power they have to constantly shape and form children; that Catholic education is not about textbooks or academic enhancements, but about the richness of Catholic ideals held dear and proclaimed each day. Findlater brought tears of happiness to many who reflected deeply on the vocation of Catholic education.

Participant evaluations from both sessions reflected appreciation for this dynamic speaker. To learn more about Findlater contact him at jjfind@aol.com

St. Columba hosts annual parish retreat

DURANGO- St. Columba Parish recently hosted their annual Parish retreat led this year by Rev. Paul G. Mast, D.Min. His three day retreat was entitled “Journeying through Lent with Columba: Evangelist, Sinner and Saint”



Paul G. Mast, D.Min. Photo by Don Blake/The Dialog.

Father Mast took parish members on an enlightened journey of reflection focused interiorly and within the context of “parish”. Sharing his marvelous gifts as a retreat master, Father Mast addressed his remarks to speak to parish youth and adults alike. He offered morning and evening sessions to encourage the participation of as many parish members as possible.

Father Mast offered messages rooted in Catholic tradition, exemplified in scripture and played out in contemporary life. Father Mast invited parishioners to look upon the spiritual renewal experience as a retreat and in closing challenged them with the mission of sowing the seeds for the future Catholic community in Durango.

Parishioner Margaret Ledford reflected “Father Mast brought us together on a journey of faith including reconciliation, offering the gift of presence – a deeper relationship with God our father and one another as community”.

In response to the three-day retreat, Parish member Pam Leininger shared “Father Mast used a computer analogy to awaken a sense of the “different program” which runs within us as Christians. In response, I drew upon this inner strength (Holy Spirit) to reconcile and evangelize my own family”.

St. Columba is shown stepping from a boat. The Celtic missionary and 12 disciples traveled the sea from Ballycastle, Ireland, to reach pagan Scotland in 563 A.D. CNS photo



Saint Columba

The holy Columba was born of noble parents, Fedelmith, Fergus' son, and his mother, Ethne Mac-naue.

In the second year after the battle of Cul-drebene, the forty-second year of his age, Columba sailed away from Ireland to Britain, wishing to be a pilgrim for Christ.

Adomnan, from his biography of Columba writes, “Devoted even from boyhood to the Christian novitiate and the study of philosophy, preserving by God's favor integrity of body and purity of soul, he showed himself, though placed on earth, ready for the life of heaven; for he was angelic in aspect, refined in speech, holy in work, excellent in ability, great in counsel. Living as an island soldier for thirty-four years, he could not pass even the space of a single hour without applying himself to prayer, or to reading, or to writing or some kind of work. Also by day and by night, without any intermission, he was so occupied with unwearying labors of fasts and vigils that the burden of each several work seemed beyond the strength of man. And with all this he was loving to everyone, his holy face ever showed gladness, and he was happy in his inmost heart with the joy of the Holy Spirit.”