

Isaiah 61: 1-9
Psalm 1
Ephesians 4: 7, 11-16
Luke 4: 16-22

Saturday April 26, 2026, Diocesan Confirmation, St. Mark's Cathedral

Your heart is your gift. God is listening for you.

**Come, Holy Spirit. Speak to us, speak through us, and awaken our hearts within us.
Amen.**

Good morning! My name is Sally Hockinson. I am the minister for children, youth and families at Trinity in Excelsior. It is a gift to be with you today. Before I say anything else, my first hope is that you take a moment to remember that you are a gift and your voice matters in this moment of your spiritual journey.

Part of confirmation preparation at Trinity has involved creating a time when we share our Baptism stories together. We talk about how baptism was most likely not your choice, but a choice made on your behalf. That's not true for everyone, but it tends to be the most common experience that there are no memories of this sacred moment besides photos, an infant gown, cards, a candle and stories from others who were there. The moment of Confirmation is when YOU can choose to keep going on this journey with THIS community of faith.

While I hope as I speak this morning, that you might hear a whisper from the Spirit at any time, I want you to know that God is also listening for you. And while the world around us waits for miracles, sometimes you might be the word God wants to speak.

In our readings today, the prophet Isaiah brings a message for God's people. He assures them that they can look forward to liberation from oppression, comfort for their broken hearts, and a gladness like everlasting joy. Then God's people waited for more than 700 years. After more than 700 years of God's people waiting, Jesus enters a synagogue, reads Isaiah's words from a scroll, and announces that HE is the fulfillment of this prophecy. HE is the good news to the poor and the power that will release the captive. He has come to give sight where we are blind and free all who are oppressed. FINALLY. But how long ago was that?

It makes me wonder if during those 700 years..between Isaiah and Jesus...if everyone just waited around...or in what ways people may have found to live into the calling of God's dreams even before Jesus walked the earth. It makes me wonder about us now. How long has it been that we've been proclaiming we believe Christ will come again? It's been thousands of years....

I don't know about you, but I'm not coping very well with just waiting around. I want us to be the ones looking for the places that love has not yet reached, and with God's help, finding our ways to be part of the promise, to be the hands and feet on the path that Jesus walked before us.

Our reading from Ephesians invites us to explore the grace within us that can bless this wider body we are a part of. I cherish that each one of us can be a unique expression of good news, vision, welcome, care, and wisdom. But I'm curious why the author of this letter suggests a contrast between maturity of faith and being like children, when Jesus taught the opposite. Jesus told the disciples that unless they RETURNED to being like children, they might never enter the kingdom of heaven. As a mother and minister for children and youth, I move in and out of age groups frequently, and as I see all of you on this day, no matter how old you are in years, I beg you not to abandon your childhood heart. Hearts of children know Divine Love better than anyone else I spend time with. When children see another child crying, they react immediately. Sometimes they start crying too. They bring stuffies, they give hugs, they repeat words of comfort that have been spoken to them. They panic if someone is hurt and demand urgent response no matter how minor the injury. They notice who is included and who is alone. They notice who has the most and who doesn't have any. Sometimes you do have to remind them, but they often are inclined to share and even give away their treasures to trusted friends.

And teenage and young adult hearts challenge whatever is the opposite of Love in ways that I believe bring Jesus gladness and everlasting joy. They argue and protest and defend and demand urgent action for any injustice great or small. And even when they don't have all the pieces of the bigger picture, what they do notice and draw our attention to, is usually real.

The people I have met who have been tossed to and fro, blown about by the wind, and tricked by fear and burned by lies are usually people who have experienced more years navigating the chaos and confusion of a world that overwhelms us to the point of forgetting the Grace that has always been ours to claim.

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I was in a room with 15 teenagers at a retreat and I asked them a question. Where is God? I asked them to close their eyes and point. Where is God? This is what I saw in response: Some pointed upward (towards the sky). Some pointed inward (towards their heart). Some held their hands open and outward. Some pointed one finger upward and one finger towards their heart. One person moved their hands in a swirling motion all around.

We have been shown a path to God and sometimes it's hard for us to know how to respond to the invitation to follow this path. So in our tradition, we have written words in case you don't know what to say. And what's cool about it, is that when you speak these words together, you join in a chorus of ancestors that sings over your soul even when you wonder what those words mean. Today you sing with them too. For your own heart, and for theirs, and for the hearts of so many still to come.

And as we wrestle with questions of what we believe in, one thing I am always certain of is that I believe we belong together. All of us here, so many before us, and so many more to come.

Today we sing promises with hearts from all over the world, to devote our presence on this earth to a life of love. Love for God. Love for our unique quirky sacred selves. And Love for others that looks like justice, healing, forgiveness, mercy, and Life. We keep singing our songs so while we are waiting, the world doesn't forget God's dreams for us.

You have come to a cathedral today, not to begin something new, but to remember something eternal. And the good news of Christ is that no matter how often any of us may forget, there is love within us that can always be reawakened to remember the Love that surrounds us. And when we remember, not only can we resist anything that hides us from this love, but we make this eternal truth visible for everyone around us. And we don't do that alone. We do it together. We do it with God.

There will be days that your faith feels alive. There will be seasons of spiritual growth. There will be other days and seasons too. There will be waiting and wondering why God's dreams haven't come true yet. Closing our eyes and asking God, where are you? When you aren't even expecting it, Jesus will come. He will. Usually through the hearts of love in the people around you. And if you're willing to offer it, through your heart too.

Soon, as the Psalmist describes, like a tree rooting down near a stream of water, you will kneel before God, with the presence of God's people around you, to offer the gifts that God created within you. Hands will be laid upon you so you remember you are blessed and filled with a Holy Spirit that moves among us and through us. The beauty of your soul will intertwine with the sacred Source of life in a promise to remember we are present with ourselves and one another for the purpose of love. Love that liberates. Love that comforts. Love that heals. Love that brings Life.

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