

## Confirmation Intro

We once more find ourselves at confirmation. We've all heard the jokes about confirmation. "If you want to get rid of the Church's mouse infestation when the exterminator can't do it, confirm them! They'll never come around again."

And I think this sadly accurate joke stems from some fundamental misunderstandings about what confirmation is. And it is worth remembering, that, first of all, it is not a graduation. "We did the Church thing, now we can move on with our lives." No, no, no. It is not a graduation, it is an initiation. Once confirmed the confirmand is no longer seen as a child in the church, but as a mature member, who isn't here just because it's their parents Church, but because they have learned what we believe, why we believe it, and, as we will see in a moment, made a bold proclamation that they believe it too. We aren't pulling the wool over their eyes, they've heard the facts, they believe them, they confess them, and so we will welcome them as one of our own, and it is up to them and us to hold fast and fight the good fight.

Confirmation is an initiation; it is being called a grown man or woman in the Church's eyes. And the Church isn't the only thing that does this. The Maasai tribe has an initiation for it's strongest warriors, they take a shield and a spear, and they go kill a full grown lion. You do that, and you are respected. The Satere-Mawe tribe has an initiation by pain. They weave a pair of gloves, fill them with bullet ants, which you can imagine how they get their name, and then you wear the gloves for ten minutes, and suffer the effects of the bites for days after. Assuming you don't succumb to toxic shock, you are considered a full member in the tribe. And people call us exclusive!

Now, while there are no lions or ants here today, there are questions. And it may not seem like a whole lot of fun to get asked a few questions in front of a bunch of people, but then again, initiation is never supposed to be a walk in the park. But it will be a testament to these people that you know your stuff. It will be a sign of respect that you are counted as one of them. And maybe it will be a reminder to them, when they can't think of an answer, that maybe, we all could brush up on why we believe what we believe. So pay attention folks.

No, confirmation is not graduation, and it is also not a joke. It is not child's play. After the examination the confirmands will be asked if they believe the teachings of the faith and if they would rather die than fall away from them. Life and death oaths are not child's play, folks. This is something real, something that matters. These confirmands are about to be initiated into the Church, where for thousands of years people have come to find refuge in a merciful God and, even when it costs them their lives, crosses under Nero, Lions and soldiers against them in the Roman Coliseum, heads cut off by ISIS, even with that in front of them, they remained steadfast through the power of the Holy Spirit, because they knew that only the One true God gives life eternal. So they weren't so afraid. And brothers and sisters in Christ, that isn't child's play.

So members, pray for them, family and friends, support them and remind them of their oath and bring them back here so they won't forget it, or the love shown to them on the cross of our Savior Jesus. And with that, I invite our confirmands forward.

Here is a sampling of the questions asked:

*How do you know there is a God, or at least something beyond the laws of physics?*

Matter is neither created nor destroyed, so something outside the laws of physics had to bring it all into existence. Also, if there is a moral law there must be a moral law giver.

*So if there is a God, he doesn't seem merciful, how do you know he likes you?*

No, but because he gave his only Son that I might live forever with him. He would not die for those he does not care about.

*Dead people don't get up. He probably just fainted.*

He would not have been healed of his wounds, or free of infection, in 3 days.

*Well then the disciples probably just stole his body.*

Then they would have died for a lie. A whole group of people do not die for something they know is a lie.

*Doesn't matter there isn't any good evidence for that Bible anyways.*

Actually, it has the best manuscript evidence of any ancient book, by far. It was written in languages we can still read and verify. It's names, dates, and places are historical and there is an unbroken chain of Christians from the disciples to today.

*Regardless, God doesn't seem that nice to me. I can't believe in a God who lets evil happen and children die.*

How can we call anything evil if we are all accidents? You call God evil only because he has given us to know good and evil. But he never made evil, we did when we pushed the good God away. And even after that, he still sent His Child, his Son, to die, so that all might have life eternal.

*But he sends people to hell!*

He died to save people from hell. People go there not because he wants them to, but because they don't want Him.

We proclaim that God is both Just and Merciful