

You Are God's Temple

✦ **Built by God** (vv.4-6)

✦ **Allied with God** (vv.7-8)

✦ **Gifted by God** (vv.9-10)

In the name of God's precious Cornerstone, dear chosen of God, especially you, dear confirmands:

When I was your age a few years ago, there was a song on the radio which I will not sing to you, but the words go something like this: "Is it my beginning, or is it the end...?" As you can guess, they were singing about boy-girl love. But it's a good question for Confirmation Sunday too. This is all about your relationship with God. Is this your beginning, or is it your end? Confirmation certainly marks a milestone in your Christian education. You have completed eight or nine years of Sunday School, two-years of Catechism instruction with memory work and tests to learn God's Word, the Bible. But would you put on your shoes and never going outside? Fill the gas tank, but never drive the car? Some Christians get confirmed and stop. They never review their Catechism or memorize another Bible passage. How sad. How foolish. God is busy building you up. He's not done with you until He places you like a trophy on display in His happy home of light. **You Are God's Temple** still being...

✦ **Built by God** (vv.4-6)

I hope you never get over how awesome this is! "*As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" Drawn by God's grace and love, you have been coming to Jesus ever since your parents carried you to the Word-powered waters of Baptism. All your life you have been preparing, and especially these past two years, to receive Christ's powerful Sacrament of the Altar. By God's power and promise you will receive the very body and blood of our Lord – in, with, and under the bread and wine – for the full and free forgiveness of your sins, for life and salvation. It's God's Word, His promise, His power.

And what are the "*spiritual sacrifices*" you have to offer that are "*acceptable to God through Jesus Christ?*" Think of how we are constantly tempted to let our bodies die for sinful pleasure. But Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. "*Therefore,*" the Lord says through His Apostle Paul, "*I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.*" (Romans 12:1 NIV84) Giving your body, mind and spirit to God day by day is the liturgy of your life. **Built by God**, sing it loud and clear.

It has been my great pleasure in our class discussions to hear how God is using you in school and among your friends to win their hearts for God and build them up too. Each of you is a "*living stone*" that God, the Master Builder, is placing in His spiritual temple which He is raising to eternal glory. "*For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'*" Some of your public school teachers have tried to shame you; others have let their light shine so that you know they too are "*living stones*" of God. Of this you can be sure now and for the rest of your life: As long as you keep coming, God will keep building you up by Word and sacrament. And not in this life, nor the next, not even in the judgment on the Last Day – you "*will never be put to shame.*" Jesus says, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33 NIV84) By His Word the Holy Spirit has caused you to be...

✦ Allied with God (vv.7-8)

You will look back and remember how you faced your fears today. God helped you stand and declare your loyalty to Him. **“Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone...’**” The triangular stone capping an arch supports the roof and walls. Pull it out, and everything falls. All the world’s authorities, secular and religious, rejected Jesus. But God placed Him at the center of your life because **You Are God’s Temple.**

In a more accurate translation Jesus is **“a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”** Many people believe they are animals, evolved from slime, instead of God’s precious creation that He wants to love and cherish for all eternity. Sometimes they act like animals. They see the bait of sinful pleasure and rush in to grab hold of all they can. They pull this way and that to satisfy themselves, but they’re pulling out the death stick that holds up the weight of the world. They want to throw Christ aside, but never realize He holds up everything and keeps it all from crashing down on their heads. **“They stumble because they disobey the message – which is the end appointed for them.”** God rescued you from eternal damnation in hell when He taught you to believe the Good News that Jesus is your Savior too.

The story is told about a stormy night off the coast of England. A ship sank with her entire crew except for one cabin boy who was hurled by the waves onto a jagged rock. There he found refuge until a morning search party spotted him, almost dead from cold and exposure. Tenderly they lifted him into a boat and took him to shore. Later they asked the boy, “Weren’t you trembling out there on the rock?” He answered, “Sure I trembled all night, but the rock never trembled once.”¹

✦ Gifted by God (vv.9-10)

Life is a gift. And you are truly **Gifted by God** with life in Jesus Christ to live forever in glory with God in heaven. By faith in Jesus, **“you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people,”** because of the sinful rebellion you have in your heart like all the rest of us. **“But now you are the people of God,”** because He adopted you through Baptism. **“Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy,”** all the more in Lord’s Supper.

My dear friends in Christ, you know that God chose you from all eternity, not because of anything good in you, but totally because of His great love for you. You could not pay to become kings with God, but that is what He makes us by faith in the King of all creation. And for Him we have awesome work to do in **“a royal priesthood”** that brings God’s sacrifice of Christ on the cross to everyone through this message of grace and wisdom God has entrusted to you. God gladly hears your priestly prayers for your friends and loved ones. You can even pray for your future spouse, for your children if God chooses to give you such gifts. We often forget what we’ve prayed, but God never forgets anything – except our sins. Because He washed them all away with the blood of His own Son, you and I will always have purpose in life. And to fulfill this purpose is the greatest joy to **“declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** God’s Word will always light up the darkest night.

This is another thing I’ve stressed in our Catechism classes. You are **Gifted by God** for a reason. It’s not to sit like a shiny car in the garage all safe from mud, rain and birds. God wants you learning more and more of His Word to get out there and be a blessing. Isn’t it amazing that this year’s class had the youngest born in Korea – then you three, one born in China, one in Africa and one in America? You are **Gifted by God** to declare His love throughout the world. God wants to use your hands connected to loving hearts to help people see and experience the loving heart of God.

How could you have a better beginning? Look what God has done. **You Are God’s Temple.** Your life of love with God is meant to increase. Now **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”** (2 Peter 3:18 NIV84)

¹ Rein, R.C. *Treasury of Themes and Illustrations*. Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1983, ref. 1547.