

1. To Zacchæus. "To-day I must abide at thy house."

2. Accepting the Magdalen's anointing. "She hath done it to My burial;" granting her a place near His cross.

3. The timid Nicodemus is made brave to honour his Lord in His burial; and Joseph of Arimathea, who had followed Him in secret, is enabled to go boldly to Pilate, and to lay the sacred Body in his own sepulchre.

"He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

"Love on the Saviour's dying head
Her spikenard drops unblamed may pour,
May mount His cross and wrap Him dead
In spices from the golden shore."

iv. Love bearing the "chastisement of our peace"; suffering—

Ignominy, for our pride.

Mockery, for our insincerity.

Pain, for our impotence and sinful indulgence.

Bonds, for our rebellious liberty.

Death, for our sinful life.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."

"O love of God, O sin of man!
In this dread hour your strength is tried;
And victory remains with love,
Since He, our Lord, is crucified."

Lessons.—Love must "suffer long and be kind"—equally in pain and in ease, with the infirmities of others, or the wounds they inflict—as courteous and patient towards "passers-by" as to our dearest. Love must give till there is nothing left to give, without stint or limit, unto death. "Without sorrow, none dwelleth in love;" it demands effort, trouble, sacrifice, giving up self, rising out of self into God, to be able to serve our brethren aright. "Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself."

CONFIRMATION.

BY THE REV. REGINALD HEBER HOWE,

Rector of the Church of our Saviour, Longwood, Mass.

Can you say this? Can you not? It is the promise to which all the others have been leading you up. Note the language, "Wilt thou then." It is the question in what renunciation, belief, confirmation in that belief, are to issue. It is the question of Christian character. Are you determined, is it your will to keep God's holy will and commandments; to seek to know, by the study of His Word, by asking Him to show you your path, what is His will regarding you; to observe those laws which He has given us to govern us in our duty toward Him and our duty toward our neighbor; and will you take this will and these commandments as your guide, for all the days of your life? Do you mean, in other words, to live as becomes one who has chosen to be Christ's follower, and who has been received into full membership in His Church? Is that your sincere and earnest purpose? Are you ready to say, I will, by God's help? Then once more, I say, Come, renew this last promise of your Baptism. Choose the Christian life as your life. Say there is no other that I wish to live, and God helping me, I will lead it, as to be meet for the Master's use and to commend to others the religion that I profess.

These are the four questions of the Baptismal Service, these the four answers to them which you re-make when you are confirmed. If you will look at them from another point of view and in other language, you will see that they are as much as to say that because of what God has done for you

and the forgiveness which is yours through Christ, you repent of whatever has been sinful in your life, you renounce all things that are so, you believe in God, you believe in your Saviour, you choose Him openly as your Master; and that, strong in the strength which comes to you in consequence of these things, you are now to strive after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Could there be opened up before you a more attractive vision of what your life might be? Is not even what is necessary on the part of those who would receive Confirmation, when we look at it in its fullness, full of rich blessing for you?

The words "upon those who are Baptized and come to Years of Discretion," call for one or two further remarks.

You may have been baptized in infancy. If so, the language "come to years of discretion" has its special application, and your Confirmation following years afterwards, is the renewing of the vows and promises which you made, or were made in your name at your Baptism, with the strengthening of the Holy Ghost that you may keep them.

Or you may have been baptized only as an adult. If so your Confirmation would naturally follow at once, the qualifications for one being the same as for the other; and it being in this case just such a service of strengthening as when the Apostles used it immediately upon baptism, and when converts to the Christian faith of course were adults. It is also the gateway to the Communion, since the Church has made the rule for her children that "there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed or be ready and desirous to be confirmed."*

Or again, you may have been baptized and even received into Communion in some other Christian body. If so—although free to come to the Holy Communion of our Church—if you intend to do so habitually, and to become a regular worshipper therein, the natural thing to do is to come into her Communion through her gateway, as others have, and in such a case Confirmation is also the mode of admission from another Communion into our own.

The words "come to years of discretion," used in the title and also in the early part of the service itself, show that as a rule Baptism in infancy is presupposed, or, in other words, that the Church's normal purpose for her children is that they should be brought to Baptism as children, be consecrated to God from the first, be under Christian training in the home and in the Sunday-school throughout their childhood, and as soon as they are old enough pass naturally and quietly into the privileges of full membership as communicants, a sudden experience or excitement being the rare exception, and only when there has been an absence of healthy Christian nurture, or it has failed to do its work. Just what the age is when one has "come to years of discretion" she has not defined. This must be determined in each instance by the Parents, the Teacher and the Rector. With one child maturity, discretion—that is, the power to distinguish—will be as great at fourteen, or even, though rarely, at twelve, as with another at sixteen. That the expression points to Confirmation as "the first act of our maturer years, rather than the last act of our childhood,"† as one has expressed it, can hardly, I think, be questioned. When you will not feel that your parents are responsible for it, and not yourself, and when you have begun to think seriously of life, and to know what you want your life to be,

* Rubric at end of Confirmation Service.

† Archdeacon Norris.

then come to Confirmation, and it will be a help to you upon which, as you look back, you will say, I would not have been without it for the world.

It remains only to sum up in a few words what are the benefits of confirmation, and to speak of some of the more common objections which arise in people's minds and deter them from it.

You ask, and you ought to ask, when considering such a rite, what are the benefits which it will bring to one rightly receiving it. They are many.

First, as we have seen, it is a Rite of Strengthening. With the outward means rightly used will come the inward gift of God's Holy Spirit, enabling you to lead a godly and Christian life.

It will bring you the benefit of having decided for yourself, and of saying out manfully before the world that you know whom you have believed, and that you mean that your life shall be on the side of Christ, and of His Kingdom.

It will bring to you the strength which always comes by association with those who are interested in the same cause.

It introduces you to the full privileges of the Christian Church, to that great means of grace, the Holy Communion, which may now be that in which Christ Himself draws near to you and you to Him; nay, in which His life may be the nourishment of your life.

Finally it makes you partaker in the blessing of that great promise of the Saviour, when He said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." Words would fail to tell, even if we knew, all that that may mean to you.

And now at last you stand face to face with the question of decision, whether you will present yourself for Confirmation or not; and difficulties and objections begin to arise in your mind, and it is to be determined whether they or you shall be master.

First, is that ever arising one expressed in homely phrase,—I am not prepared for it; I am not good enough,—so excellent an objection if by it you mean one thing, so utterly worthless if you mean another. Good enough in one sense you will never be, if you wait a lifetime; good enough in another you may be, whenever you will. If you mean that you really are not worthy, that you are living consciously and willingly in sin, that you are doing day by day things which you know you ought not to do, and are not trying to do differently, and that it causes you no regret, no pain, when you do wrong; or if you are thoughtless and flip-pant and your whole spirit is such as to lead you to say, Yes, I am ready for Confirmation, I am prepared for it; then indeed you are not good enough, and you had better go and think long and seriously before you dare present yourself for that holy Rite.

But if your heart and purpose are right, and you feel that, though coming far short of what you know you ought to be and full of a sense of unworthiness to ask Christ to accept your poor imperfect service, you still do want to be His disciple and mean to try to be a faithful one, and to this end would use all the helps which He has provided you;—then you are good enough, for you have all that He requires—an honest and good heart, faith in Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, and the sincere and earnest purpose to live worthy of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ. More than this is not, cannot be asked of you.

Confirmation is not, how often must we say it, a badge of perfection, not a setting up of oneself as better than others; it does not say that you have yet attained or are already perfect, but only that