

Several years ago, the Madison, WI fire department decided to lower their minimum physical requirements for fire fighters to allow more women to be fire fighters. Instead of carrying a 150 lb. bag of sand a certain distance, they need only carry a 75 lb. sand bag. Following this change, a new woman fire fighter was interviewed by a large reporter: "If I were trapped unconscious on the second story of my house, how would you rescue me?" "I'd grab you by the feet and drag you down," was her reply. If you picture that in your mind, you can imagine the concussive problem with such a decision.

Now, shift this to the Christian faith. We, too, are all fire fighters, but the fire we are to save others from is not just the fire of a blazing vehicle or building, but the eternal fires of hell, and we don't have axes and hoses, but God's Word and the Sacraments. "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:19,20, NIV). Yet so often, we lower our standards.

This month, we celebrate the confirmation of two of our youth, and while the rite of confirmation is a manmade convention, catechesis, instruction in the basics of the Christian faith, is a Scriptural mandate. Yet having talked to pastors of various churches and denominations, the trend seems universal that children are so busy in school and other extra-curricular activities, that they don't have time for catechesis, and requirements for that class go unfilled and unfinished in favor of scholastic and athletic disciplines. In defense of their children, parents, recognizing the burden on their children, ask that the standards for confirmation be lowered, that the requirements be reduced, that, in effect, a 75 lb load replace the 150 lb. load.

Over the years, confirmation requirements have indeed lessened. I believe most people my age or older will agree that even my class requirements are lighter than the requirements we had when we were in the class. Is this a good thing? To answer that question, we must determine the purpose of confirmation class.

First of all, the purpose is *not* to "get through it & get confirmed." We receive neither blessing nor assurance of anything in confirmation. The point of the class is that "*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" follows Baptism. The point is *teaching* to make disciples. Teaching *part of* everything Jesus has commanded us and then going out into the world to win others for Christ is like an airline pilot who got straight "D"'s in flight school. Would you want to fly with that pilot?

In catechesis, which is a lifelong process, both before and after confirmation class, God equips us in getting through this world of sin and temptation to the goal of eternal life, the greatest goal a parent could have for a child and himself as well as the goal of the church and the church's servants for everyone. This applies to all people, not just children and parents.

And how does He equip us? He forgives us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, even the sin of neglecting our own and our children's spiritual health. He gives us His Word & Sacraments, which the Holy Spirit uses to "strengthen and keep you in the true faith to life everlasting" so we may depart from this life, when the time comes, in peace.