

***History is made in Little Grand Rapids –  
The Sacrament of Confirmation is Celebrated for the First Time!***

October 2018

By Sr. Monica Katchag, HHCJ

*‘God put strength in me and now I feel that God is with me wherever I go!’* exclaimed a young girl after having celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation.

It was a joyful day of celebration and hearts filled with renewed faith and community at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Little Grand Rapids I. R. Mission, MB. when twenty-two children, ages 7-16 gathered with their families to celebrate First Communion and/or Confirmation on Sunday, September 30, 2018. Seven of those children received First Communion and fifteen received the Sacrament of Confirmation.



Families, grandparents, friends and community gathered in large numbers to share the candidates' journey of faith.

*‘History was made’* expressed the parish pastor Fr. Arul Savari, OFM. This was the first time in the Mission's history that children and their families had prepared for and celebrated these sacraments.

For the past five years, the candidates had attended sacramental preparation classes prepared and animated by the religious sisters who serve in the native missions – the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ).

The religious sisters rotate between eight Native Parishes (Berens River, Bloodvein, Fort Alexander, Hollow Water, Little Grand Rapids, Manigotogan, Pauingassi, Poplar River) to offer sacramental preparation, participate in the life of the community, visit families (at home) whether they are Catholic or not, provide counselling and participate in the life of the community. Many people in the community expressed a great appreciation for the sincere apostolate of presence provided by the sisters. This ongoing rotation is continuing and is a blessing to both the sisters and the families.

Most Reverend Archbishop Albert LeGatt came to Little Grand Rapids to preside the Mass which was held at 11 AM and concelebrated with the parish pastor, Fr. Arul Savari, SDM. It was wonderful to see music teachers from the school in Little Grand Rapids and some of the parishioners provide music ministry together for Mass.

Parents were very moved to present their children to the bishop for Confirmation.

The celebration continued with joy as everyone gathered for lunch after Mass. The parish catechists Sr. Monica Katchang, HHCJ and Sr. Calista Ebe, HHCJ were delighted with the help and support provided by the families and community, including workers from Child & Family Services who attended Mass, brought an abundance of food and helped to serve lunch after Mass. Even Bishop LeGatt brought a huge cake which was beautifully decorated with the theme of the sacraments. The children were so excited and thrilled to eat the bishop's cake!



Each candidate received some very special gifts: a rosary (given by Fr. Rhéal Forest); a New Testament Bible and a special picture frame made by Fr. Lionel Thibault, a retired priest who has a love & passion for the people in the northern missions and loves making crafts!

Families eagerly hung the picture frames in their house, immediately after the celebration and even posted photos of the Mass, festivities and gifts on Facebook. Many people responded to the Facebook posts expressing joy and support and it was wonderful that people far from the areas could be so connected!



The very same day of celebration, during clean up, Sr. Monica received a phone call from one of the confirmation candidates. *“Sister Monica, when will you pick us up for catechism class today?”* asked the young girl, eager to continue her journey in faith. How powerful an excited question can be!

One of the grandparents expressed his profound appreciation to the Bishop and to the Sisters that this sacramental preparation had been offered in their parish. This has brought new life to the parish and community. People are joining together in the parishes, including people that now have just begun attending church.



Looking to the future, the Sisters hope to return during the Summer of 2019 to offer sacramental preparation for First Communion and Confirmation. Already, there are candidates who wish to celebrate those sacraments!

***Testimonies from the candidates who celebrated First Communion  
&/or Confirmation:***

*I was reading then I felt like I was going to fall. Then my heart started to beat fast and my legs felt weak. God put strength in my legs and it felt like God was with me wherever I go. Kally Bushie*

*I felt so happy when I saw my Mom. I felt something touch me when I ate the bread and drank the wine. I was wearing a white dress. We had lots of food to eat (during lunch after Mass). Today was a very special day for me. Malayda Green*

*I felt nervous, but I also felt happy. During the readings I saw my Mom and I was so happy to see her. We had a big feast after Mass. We had a special day on Sunday. I received my First Communion and Confirmation. Nodin Keeper*