

TO BE A PENGUIN
Confirmation –Communion –June 2, 2013 –I Timothy 4: 11-16
The Church of the Covenant

When someone read my sermon title they asked: “What does a little black and white flightless bird from Antarctica have to do with Confirmation...or communion, or Christianity for that matter? Wrong penguin. Of course, I am speaking about the only Penguins that matter right now –The Pittsburgh Penguins. Now the last time I even had a pair of skates on was probably 50 years ago. But even then as a child I wasn’t very good at it. You know, how your ankles sort of bend over and you’re almost skating on the side of your skates rather than the blade of the skates? And how when you’d start going a little too fast you’d wonder how you were going to stop and you generally stopped by falling down? Now why would I, Stu, ever think that having not even had a pair of skates on in 50 years, or having practiced even once, or been any good when I had those skates on, why would I ever suspect that I could play for the Pittsburgh Penguins...let alone play for them in the Stanley Cup finals? Stu, you’re an idiot if you think that. But strangely enough, that’s the way a lot of people think about their Christian faith –I joined church when I was young, never went very much between then and now, but somehow I think I can skate in the spiritual Stanley Cup playoffs. Stu, you’re an idiot.

So this is my sermon for the Confirmation Class –in order TO BE A PENGUIN you have to practice, and practice, and practice. And in order to be a Christian you have to do the same. Saying a few words in worship one Sunday doesn’t make you a Christian –practice of the faith makes you a Christian. The old joke where the man hops into a cab in New York City and asks the cabbie: “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” was answered by the Cabbie: “Practice, practice, practice.” If it is so in sports and it is so in music, why wouldn’t we suspect it is so also in our faith?

Our scripture from I Timothy is the Apostle Paul’s advice to his young friend and son in the Lord, Timothy. You might say it is his message to a confirmation class. He writes to Timothy: *“Do not neglect the gift you have...” (I Timothy 4: 14)* Everyone of us has gifts we were given by God that we are to use for HIM and His Son, Jesus. God has called us here today to be part of His efforts in reclaiming His world and making it a better place. If we use those gifts for HIM then we are practicing our faith. The Apostle later writes: *“Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, that all may see your progress.” (v. 15)* What are these things we are to PRACTICE? Worship attendance, prayer, study, service, mission, fellowship with other Christians, are all things we practice as Christians together. To be a Penguin you have to practice skating and stick handling and a thousand things in order to get better and better at hockey; to be a Christian you have to practice worship and prayer and study and service in order to be better at our faith. The Apostle begins by stating to his young friend: *“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (v. 12)* The Apostle is saying start well, practice your faith just like you’re going to get into the Stanley Cup finals one day. Don’t wait until you’re old to do this, but set an example for others right now. God doesn’t think young people are somehow less; He expects them to be more. Churches and communities are transformed by young people taking their faith seriously, practicing their faith, not waiting for 50 years to decide to try to skate again, but deciding to make a difference immediately. In every one of the churches I have served it is the young people who “get it” first and begin to do things and take on projects and do mission and other things that far “outskate” other adult members of the church. Don’t wait 50 years to be a Penguin; be a Penguin today; skate like a Penguin; have an attitude like a Penguin; BE a Penguin. Don’t wait 50 years to be a Christian; decide today to be a Christian today.

Last thing. When tough times come in your life this is like a big playoff game for the Stanley Cup. Whether you make the goal or spend time in the penalty box is determined by how much time you have spent in prayer, studying and worshipping. Your Christian skill level gets you through the tough time, just like your practice time on the ice gets you through the big playoff game. And, of course, then there is the Stanley Cup finals of life, that day where you pass away and go to be with God. Don't you want to be prepared? Don't you want to win the Stanley Cup? Don't you want to inherit the crown of righteousness and the gift of eternal life?

One of the great privileges of my life has been working with this Confirmation Class and seeing your faith come alive as a gift from God. Please don't neglect that gift. Please set an even higher standard than the adults around you. Please practice those things which will make you a stronger and stronger Christian and prepare you for life and eternal life. Please.

TO BE A PENGUIN –you have to practice. To make it to the Stanley Cup –you have to practice. To be a Christian –you have to practice. To go to heaven –you have to practice the faith God has given you as a gift. Why would we think it was any other way? Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*