**Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 Watch your step when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen, rather than to give the kind of sacrifice fools give, for they do not know that they are doing wrong. 2Do not be hasty with your mouth, and in your heart do not be in a hurry to bring a matter before God, because God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. 3As too much busyness leads to dreams, too many words lead to foolish talk. 4When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it, for he takes no delight in fools. Fulfill whatever you have vowed. 5Better that you do not vow, than that you do make a vow and do not fulfill it. 6Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say to the temple official that the vow was a mistake. Why should God be angry because of what you say and ruin the work your hands have done? 7A lot of dreaming produces a lot of vapor. So does a lot of words. Instead, fear God.**

Vow Before the Lord

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ and especially you the confirmands.

Having you been breathing a sigh of relief yet? That time you worried and stressed about for at least a few weeks now is done. You have completed your confirmation examination. You like most other confirmands dread going through that. It is serious and intimidating, I’ll give you that. Since it is just giving statements about what you believe, it should be natural for us as Christians. Sure, all those eyes were on you. And you wondered if these people were judging you. It made you afraid if you got something wrong. You got through it. Breathe your sigh of relief…

…because something that is more serious is coming up. If there was something you should be worried about and stressing over and spending all kind of time contemplating, it has yet to come.

When you were facing the congregation all your thoughts were on if you would look dumb if you got something wrong. You were worried about what other people would think about you. you could judge their facial expressions that you could see. You thought that if you did or said something wrong it would be embarrassing. People would remember that for years. You would get red in the face. When you were facing the congregation, you were all worried about yourself.

Sadly, that is what people like to focus on. They like to focus on themselves. They will even go and say that today is about individuals. Today for many, possibly for most, is about you, the confirmands completing your catechism studies and being able to receive communion. You will receive congratulations (which are appropriate). People will tell you well-done. “You really know stuff.”

What it so often missed is the more important and serious part of confirmation Sunday—the public profession of faith which you will make in a short while. Because you five will once again approach the altar and this time you won’t turn to face the congregation and have their eyes fixed on you. Instead, you will face the front and God’s eye will fix on you as your make a vow before God. **Do not be hasty with your mouth, and in your heart do not be in a hurry to bring a matter before God, because God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.** Are you seriously ready for what you are going to be say? You are coming before God who is over everything. He sees everything. He even knows what you are thinking better than you know your own thoughts. It’s intimidating.

He is the God who loved people so much to send Jesus to die for the sins of the world. He is the God who raised Jesus to assure people that God has declared them not guilty because of Jesus. But don’t let his love towards you downplay the seriousness of what will happen here today. God will have you under oath, not just a ritual. You might have been ready to be examined on your confirmation, but are you ready to make the vow before God?

Consider what it is like to before God. It’s going before a king. You are a subject. He can do anything he wants with you. He has the right to demand you serve him. You live in his world. You exist because he ruled you to be just who you are. He has invited you into his presence. It’s very serious whenever you are before him to make a vow you are summoned to give him services with your ears, your words, your being, and everything that you have. **Watch your step when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen, rather than to give the kind of sacrifice fools give, for they do not know that they are doing wrong.**Don’t come before God and make a vow without seriously considering what you will be doing.

Did you take to heart what you are going to swear before God? It’s not just thoughtless saving “I do” to a few questions. It’s swearing allegiance to your King. You are going to tell God, to his face, that you are going to remain to be his, completely. **When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it, for he takes no delight in fools. Fulfill whatever you have vowed.**God expects that you will carry out what you say. You will serve him and not his enemy the Devil. That you owe loyalty to him because he has given you forgiveness, life, and salvation. That you cherish his Word. That you willing choose death rather than live for another, even yourself, before him. That you will live for him as long as you live. This won’t be just something you say but that you will carry through with actions. Do you really understand what you are going to be saying?

If you really have sighed the breath of relief because you think the intimidating part of today is over, let me assure you that it’s not past. It is only moments in your future. I ask you are you sure that you want to make this vow before God. **Better that you do not vow, than that you do make a vow and do not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say to the temple official that the vow was a mistake. Why should God be angry because of what you say and ruin the work your hands have done?** If you make this vow and do now intent to keep it, if you don’t carry through with your vow, God’s anger will come against you. Making the vow, erases any manner of being able to talk your way your out of what you say. You will be without excuse. If you make this vow and abandon your position of subject to God the Almighty King, he will have a worse punishment waiting for you than if you had just been an unbeliever.

Are you ready to make this vow? I think that you are. You have shown me that you are able to do what God describes for his subjects, his servants, his children. But honestly, only God and you really knows if you actually intend to do what you say you will. For many have been in the same spot as you are and have come before God and made this vow to their ruin because they saw this as an end—a ceremony they just needed to do, rather than a wholehearted commitment given to God.

The reason this vow is taken before you receive communion is because, you are to restate this vow every time you come before God to receive the Lord’s Supper. At each of those times, God is calling you, one of his subjects, his disciples, to come before him. He wants you to see this sacrament as him pouring out his wealth, goodness, love and grace on you. He is giving you the body and blood of Jesus, his Son. If you are one of his faithful disciples he gives you forgiveness, life, and salvation. If you come before him not as one of his disciples, as one who vows to live, as one who willingly leaves behind all other things you might think to serve, God knows. **Fear God.** Because whether you are making this vow before God for the first time or are repeating as your come before the Lord’s alter to have communion with him, you ought to be ready, prepared, and examined before you step before him.

I admit that this is all intimidating. Be glad it is because all of your well-being hangs in this balance and augments the goodness God has for you. If you truly believe in God the Father almighty the Maker of heaven and Earth; in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; and in the Holy Spirit; the vow you make before the Lord is just naturally saying what you already believe and do. You know that you can stand before God because Jesus is your Savior. You are glad that God has made you one of his own and you have no worries about the vow because you know for sure without a doubt that you are one of his.

Let the vow you say before him for the first time or for another time be made in all seriousness but also with all joy. Come before your King. Enter before your Lord. Let your words and deeds not be vapor and meaningless. Fulfill your vow before the LORD to be one of his faithful disciples. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

* What is it like to before God to make a vow?
* Give three reasons why vows before God need to be taken to heart.
* Describe the reaction we ask from God when we don’t live out our vow before him.
* Why can you make the vow to be one of God’s subjects?

Prayer: Almighty God, you made us brothers and sisters, members of the body of your dear Son, Jesus Christ. You washed us by his blood, buried us with him in his death, and gave us a new life in his resurrection. Renew us by the Holy Spirit, which you have poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. Let us be faithful to the vow we make before you as we live out our lives as heirs of eternal life. Lead us to serve your Church in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. Keep us in fellowship with all who wait for the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.