

CONFESSION – Part 1

Dear Family,

Following is the first of a two part series on confession. The text comes from our Diocesan Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. This year we are not having an Advent “reconciliation service” as in the past. Instead I have expanded the opportunities and times of confession. Please refer to the bulletin for details. No matter how confession is offered, please do not relegate your confession visits to only 1 or 2 times per year. St. John Paul II said that we should go to confession at least once per month. We need the grace received through frequent use of the sacraments in order to make any real spiritual progress. Have a good, holy Advent!

Pope Francis once spoke these words to thousands of people, “Be courageous and go to Confession!” Why is the Sacrament so important for our well-being? Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Confession because we need healing from the effects of personal sin after Baptism. The Lord is the doctor of the soul. Let’s take a closer look.

Pope Francis further explains in the following remarks made on February 19, 2014. Dear Brothers and Sister, through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist man receives new life in Christ. However, we are still subject to temptation, to suffering, to death and, because of sin, we can even lose this new life. Jesus therefore willed that the Church continue His works of salvation for her members, in particular through the Sacrament of Reconciliation...a Sacrament of healing.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation flows directly from [the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus]. In fact, on the very evening of Easter the Lord appeared to the disciples, saying, “Peace be with you! Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (John 20:21-23). This passage reveals to us the most profound dynamic that is contained in this Sacrament.

First of all, the fact that the forgiveness of our sins is not something that we can give ourselves. I cannot say: “I forgive my sins.” [When we sin, who is it that is sinned against? Is it me? When I sin, do I sin against myself? Modern relativism says that is the case. President Obama was asked several months ago, “What is sin?” His answer is shocking and yet is almost to be expected from anyone of us who have been formed by relativism. He said that sin was defined as “Being out of line with my own values.” Think about that for a second...King David says, “Against You, [Lord], You alone have I sinned, what is evil in our sight I have done.” (Ps 51) If sin is contrary to what I have determined what is right or wrong, then where does God fit in? What about the 10 Commandments? God wrote those laws, not me; not you. So, when we sin, we must ask God, Himself, for forgiveness.]

Forgiveness is asked from Jesus. Forgiveness is not the fruit of our efforts but it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who fills us with the purification of mercy and grace which flows incessantly from the wide-open Heart of the crucified and risen Christ.

Next week we will conclude this two part series and will include an insert with a good Examination of Conscience to help us experience the healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession. God bless and Mary keep you.

Fr. Michaud