Hearts Made New

“Yeah Sister, I know what you mean! I remember this time I went to Confession when I was little, like 6 or 7 years old…”

We were sitting in our front parlor with a woman who had called that day. As she sipped extra chocolaty hot cocoa, and another Sister and I had steaming mugs in our hands, we talked together for the first time. With bleached blonde hair pulled back into a French braid, beautiful olive skin, and eyes full of honest tears, she had the courageous heart of a lion - and had recently discovered she was 8 weeks pregnant.

We listened to most of *Cassie’s life story that afternoon, and though she had walked through some of the valley of darkness in her young years, God’s fingerprints were still all over her story. He led her out of situations alive and well, while some of her peers were still deeply struggling. She revealed she was baptized Catholic and somehow the topic of Confession came up. Then she proudly shared this story:

“...Yeah, I know Confession is powerful. I remember this time that it, like, really made a difference in me. I once stole a candy bar from the grocery store and I remember saying it afterwards in a confession. Then the next time I was at the store in the checkout with my mom, my friend was there, and she whispered, ‘See that candy bar? Take it!’ I said, ‘No’, because I remembered saying it in Confession, and I didn’t want to do it again. My friend told me again, ‘Look, it’s right there-take it!’ ‘NO’, I whispered more loudly. A third time: ‘Take it, quick, no one’s looking….’ And I shouted really loudly, ‘NO! I'M NOT TAKING THE CANDY BAR!!’”

As her mom’s head swiveled towards her, confused and curious, Cassie knew that she had won the fight against the temptation to do what she knew to be wrong. Amazing. The power of Confession.

Now we find ourselves again receiving a gift from the Church - we’re in the middle of another season of Lent. The Lord is a gentleman, tender and gracious, yet protecting with valor that which is dearest to Him - our hearts. He invites us once again this Lent to turn back to Him and to, “Repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). He calls us to remove those things that have built up between Him and us, to let there be a clean walkway, totally open lines of communication between His Heart and ours. He wants only our joy. And He offers us the opportunity to let Him remove those things which make our hearts hard and clear away the stumbling blocks we’ve created. This happens through time spent with Him in prayer, and particularly, in the sacrament of Confession.

“Come now,” the Lord says through Isaiah the prophet, “Let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool” (Is 1:18).

And He reveals his deep desire for our good and our thriving when He shares with us in Ezekiel: “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek 36:26).

That sort of conversion is for us; it wasn’t reserved just for people who lived in the time of the Old Testament prophets. It’s real and it’s possible. Deep conversion and deep prayer are meant for us
this Lent, along with its deep joy that awaits us. So let us go, with confidence and the trust of little children, and take advantage of the sacrament of Confession during this season of repentance. Let us see what amazing graces He has for us and witness the two-edged sword of strength it gives us to say yes to the good, and no to the bad. Let us open our hearts to experience the utter strength and grace of the sacrament to effect change in our own lives. Then we may find ourselves witnessing to another, “Yeah, I know Confession is powerful. I remember this one time…”

Heavenly Father, You see us, You hear us, and You know our needs even before we ask. Thank You for being our Father, for being so radically available to us. We beg You for the grace to be faithful to You again this Lent, for receptive hearts open to being refreshed and made new, ready for conversion and sensitive to Your movements and promptings. Jesus, let us walk with You in this journey in the desert and through Your Passion that, united with You, we may also rise with You in Your Resurrection. Amen.

*Name changed for confidentiality*