

## Confession is Good for the Soul

Today's scripture puts us in touch with the truth that we are not yet holy as God is holy or perfect as God is perfect. We Fall Short, we are sinners!

The Good News, we are not without hope, because the God who created us in His divine image love us and wants us to be a reflection of His love. The God who loves us also wants to enter into a relationship with us from which we will draw life, true happiness and a deep fulfillment. When we sin, we place that relationship in jeopardy and stand in need of the forgiveness and rehabilitation (penance) that will make us whole and holy again.

At times **we fail to recognize our sin** or ignore the fact that we are sinning. **This is where the community, The Church, the body of Christ plays a role and begs the question..."Am I my brother's keeper". The answer is yes you are!** Yes we are! Yes the Church is!

Ezekiel tells us that our responsibility for one another requires us to warn each other so as to "**dissuade the wicked**" from their ways. If we fail to do so, says the prophet, then we are culpable. **God made us our brother's keeper! We are responsible for one another. This is the antithesis to Live and Let Live. It is none of my business.**

Parents who tell their adult children what is right take heart! We need to be reminded of God, his law but we need to do it with a spirit of love! **The spirit of love is the trick...I love you enough to tell you what God wants for me and you!**

Matthew offers us a glimpse into the inner working of his church in 80 C.E. In order to help one another become more authentic images of God, the community had to work out a process whereby those who sinned might be made aware of their sin, seek forgiveness and be reconciled to God AND to their brothers and sisters. **There efforts were intended not only to save the soul of the person being intervened on but to keep the community honest and strong in its witness to God and to Christ. Thereby, as a community of forgiveness they would also draw, outsiders into their community by their example. Everyone is a winner!!!**

It is the business of the Church, the body of Christ to desire and strive to be healthy, well and Holy. **And so confession of sin both communally and individually brings the light of Christ into the darkness and seclusion of the heart.** Sin that is brought to light loses its power once it is exposed and owned as sin. Sin brought into the light no longer threatens the person or the unity of the community. **You see the Catholic Church, unlike some Protestant Churches, has never taught that sin is a private issue between me and God or you and God.**

**It is the Church's business, the heart of the Church's work and mission, to bring sinners home and restore them to health and holiness.** In recent years, we in the Church as put off reconciliation as some sort of side line to our regular business. But based on the message of Jesus and the Scriptures, I would argue that reconciliation is not a sideline of the Church but the mainline of the Church. If I was going to look at what is important to Christ and to the Church...I might look at the first words after the Resurrection. That would definitely be an important moment wouldn't you agree. What are Jesus words? "Peace be with you...receive the Holy Spirit...Whose sins you forgive are forgiven and whose sins you retain are retained!" In other words, we have been commissioned to do the great work of Jesus, "to forgive our sins."

In an effort to stress the necessity of regular confession, Pope John Paul I cited the experience of Jonathan Swift's servant. After spending the night in an inn, Swift asked for his boots, which the servant brought to him covered in dust. When asked why they hadn't been cleaned, the servant replied, "After a few miles on the road, they'll be dirty again, so why bother." "Quite right," said Swift. "Now get the horses and let us be on our way." "Without breakfast?" cried the servant. "There's no point," said Swift. "After some miles on the road, you'll be hungry again" (Anthony Castle, *A Treasure of Quips, Quotes and Anecdotes*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, Conn.: 1998).

So it is with confession. Admitting our sin and seeking forgiveness must become a routine aspect of our spiritual journey. To put it more colloquially, confession should be understood to be as a necessary “pit stop” without which we will not grow and our relationships with others will not flourish. As John Paul I put it, not only does confession result in the forgiveness of sin, it gives us the grace to avoid sin in the future and “makes firmer our friendship with God.”

The truth is we are not holy as our God or perfect as he is perfect, but we are called to be the reflection and image of God who made us in love to be love.

O if today you hear His voice, or the voice of your brother or sister spoken in love, harden not your hearts.