

I sincerely believe part of being a father is raising a little heck once in a while. I know when my dad came home ticked off, things got done. Don't worry, I'm not ticked off. I mention it because I know some people appreciated the detailed examination of conscience because they told me so. However, I imagine some people didn't, or perhaps, found it overwhelming. That's what I expected to happen and what I wanted to happen. A complacent attitude is never a good thing for any of us. We never have the spiritual life mastered.



As I mentioned in last week's bulletin, the Catholic understanding of truly keeping the Ten Commandments is much more involved than meets the eye. Besides my mother (wink), I don't think any of us can go through that examination without realizing we don't quite measure up. In a certain sense, that's a good sign. Part of growing spiritually is acknowledging our sinfulness. For those further removed from an active faith life, it involves recognizing and acknowledging their misery without God. Once a person becomes aware of their sinfulness and/or their misery without God, they have a choice to make. They can make a resolution to metaphorically throw themselves at the feet of Jesus begging for His Mercy or they can just keep going on as before. Hopefully, the person chooses the former. When we lower ourselves, or we are at our lowest, if we have a contrite heart, God will raise us up. If you could invest in people on the open market, I would invest heavily in a contrite person, because that is a person God is going to raise up.

What one does not want to do is harden his/her heart. To make a biblical reference, woe to the person who goes through that examination and becomes angry with the rigor of the examination. In my opinion, that's a dangerous sign. The only sin that's unforgivable is a sin against the Holy Spirit. The Church has traditionally understood that sin of not acknowledging one's sinfulness and one's need for God's mercy as a refusal of salvation. When we die and are judged, we are all going to find out that everything on that examination, and probably more, is sinful and our response to our transgressions has to be contriteness, not anger or disgust. Therefore, don't dismiss the examination. Treat it as a opportunity to grow into the person God is calling you to be.

There's a tension in the spiritual life. On one hand, we need to live with and understand that because of our sins, we don't deserve the shirt on our back. On the other hand, we need to understand, and in some way feel, just how much God loves us. It's a love beyond measure. God loves us rich or poor, fat or skinny, sinner or saint. Once we own both, we should invest heavily in ourselves, because spiritually speaking, we are about to takeoff. It's my hope that at least one or two people go through last week's examination and/or read this reflection and they benefit eternally from it. So yes, I published last week's examination in order to rattle some people, but only so all of us can benefit from it.