

This past Wednesday was the official beginning of Summer Vacation for the students here at St. Joseph the Worker School. After a half-day of school — that consisted of Mass, a cookout, and some time on the playground — the students went home until the beginning of September.

A couple of hours later, I sat in my office wondering what was wrong. There wasn't any noise, but what was missing was the sound of recess. It's easy to hear the sound of playing in the playground behind our school and church.

We've got a well-equipped playground — lots of slides, swings, and other playground equipment ... not to mention plenty of green space for playing sports or other games.

Today's readings are all about sin and forgiveness. There is a certain consistency in sin and forgiveness that goes all the way back to the first sin ... the original sin ... in the Garden of Eden.

After Adam and Eve had eaten of the Tree they were told NOT to eat from ... what did they do?

THEY HID FROM GOD.

And God ... in not so many words ... asked them "WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM?"

And from that first game of "Hide and Seek" or maybe we should call it "Hide and Sin," came a repeated pattern of sin followed by hiding.

In the first reading, the Prophet Nathan tells King David a parable, and David falls right for it — he wants to punish the man who did wrong in the story ... and Nathan tells him "YOU ARE THAT MAN!" David was so good at hiding from God, and even hiding from his own sin that he didn't even recognize himself in the story.

In the second reading, St. Paul explains to the Christians in Galatia the difference between grace and the law. It seems that those early Christians wanted something more than the simplicity of Gospel forgiveness. They wanted to do it on their own.

And in this letter, he tells them that if they can find forgiveness on their own ... “then Christ died for nothing.”

Finally, in the Gospel, we hear the story of the woman who anoints Jesus’ feet with her tears in the house of a Pharisee. The Pharisee is hung up on who this woman was — versus who she has become in Christ ... and fails to recognize his own sinfulness and the person of Christ who sits at his table.

The answer ... the solution to our own game of “hide and sin” can be found in the Psalm response. The Psalmist tells God “YOU are my hiding place.”

That is, instead of hiding FROM God, we need to hide IN God.

Forgiveness is a free gift. Come and get it.

You don’t need to be “worthy” enough to ask for forgiveness.

You don’t need to work your way up to asking for forgiveness.

Rather, all you need to do is ask, and it is yours.

There’s no cash machine outside the confessional. I don’t check ID, or hook anyone up to a lie detector when they come into the confessional. Nor do I yell at them, or ask them embarrassing questions. You are never turned away from the confessional.

Rather, you confess your sins, receive absolution, and the assurance that your sins are forgiven.

Today as we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for an END to our hiding from God ... and END of hiding from our sins. Let us acknowledge our own sinfulness before the Almighty ... and be prepared to receive the GIFT of forgiveness that awaits us. Let us find our HIDING PLACE in the LOVE OF GOD ... our HIDING PLACE where FORGIVENESS freely awaits us ... we who are children of God the Father, redeemed in Jesus Christ, and filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.