

According to an online source, comfort foods “are foods that soothe the psyche by reminding us of comforting childhood memories.” They are rarely gourmet foods and most likely are just plain home cooking. They tend to bring about “feelings of nostalgia, safety, and security.”

A poll on that website determined that the top two comfort foods were:
peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
and grilled cheese,

followed by:

meatloaf, mashed potatoes, pot roast, fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, and tuna casserole.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, the prophet speaking for God cries out:

*Comfort, give comfort to my people.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
... her guilt is expiated*

A good image ... a strong image of safety and security. An image of God’s love.

In the Gospel, we hear John the Baptist being asked by the crowds

What should we do?

The answers he gives could be summarized as:

- (1) share
- (2) be honest
- (3) speak the truth
- (4) be satisfied with what you have

All of which sounds like pretty good advice.

But human nature hasn’t changed much in 2,000 years. We are creatures of habit, and we live in a fallen world.

Did the tax collectors really need John the Baptist to tell them not to take more money than they were supposed to collect? Did the soldiers really need to be told not to extort, or lie? Did the regular people who asked really not know they should share with the needy?

I’m guessing, “No.” I’m guessing they knew what they should be doing.

And most likely, so do all of us.

We all know right from wrong. In a very real sense, this is written on our hearts.

And in a few minutes, we will begin to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Many of us remember it by its former names as Confession or Penance.

Yes, we will Confess our sins - which I would guess we all recognize is a difficult thing to do. It is very challenging for us to admit our own faults - to accuse ourselves of our own short-comings. Most people are pretty good at telling other people what's wrong with them. But today, let's take a break from that - and look at ourselves.

And we receive a Penance - often a few short prayers, or an act of mercy or charity done to repair in a small way whatever it is we have done.

But the meat and potatoes of the Sacrament is Reconciliation - reconciliation is the re-establishment of a relationship.

Sin hurts other people. Sin damages our relationship with God. And sin injures us as well - when we sin, we hurt ourselves.

And that is the comfort portion of today's liturgy - the repairing of an imperfect relationship - with God, with ourselves, and with others.

On top of that, because this is a Sacrament, there is always an infinite outpouring of grace, and mercy, and love - through the immense generosity of our loving God and Father, by the saving passion of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

And so, while it's not PB&J or Mac'n'Cheese - there is grace at work here tonight. Let us make an honest assessment of ourselves and dive into the ocean of grace and mercy that God offers us in this wonderful Sacrament. That we may all receive comfort - God's comfort for His beloved people.