

~From the Administrator~

Dear Parish Family,

March 7, 2010

This week I was able to spend a few days down state with my parents. It was nice to have some time off. My mom had some Spring cleaning requests for me; and we went through some old boxes of papers throwing out stuff that I'd been accumulating for years.

Part of our Lenten practice is the *Easter Duty*. This can serve as a sort of spiritual Spring cleaning, and is defined in the *New Catholic Dictionary* as "The obligation of members of the Church to approach the Sacrament of Penance, if in a state of sin, once a year; and also of receiving the Eucharist, as a mark of fidelity to membership. The prescribed time for fulfilling the Easter duty extends from the first Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday."

To this end, I'll be hearing confessions at the school on Fridays (and on some Thursdays); and will be in the confessional EVERY Saturday of Lent at both 10:30am and 4:00pm. I will also be available for confession during Eucharistic Adoration on March 11. For those who would like to make an appointment, please contact me at the parish office. Also, I will be helping out at Penance Services at different parishes on the following days:

MARCH 11	7:00pm	Sacred Heart (Merrill) 419 S. Midland St., 643-5171
MARCH 18	7:00pm	Saint Henry (Rosebush) 4079 E. Vernon Rd., 433-2229
MARCH 23	7:00pm	Saint Mary CMU (Mt. Pleasant) 1405 S. Washington St., 773-3931
MARCH 24	7:00pm	Sacred Heart (Gladwin) 300 N. Silverleaf St., 426-7154
MARCH 25	7:00pm	Saint Michael (Remus) 8929 50th Ave., 967-3520

I hope that everyone who desires to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation will have an opportunity to celebrate this sacrament.

Let us continue to pray for each other daily as we move through this Holy season of Lent! God bless you!

Fr. David

FOUR IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE CELEBRATION OF PENANCE

CONFESSION: telling our sins to the representative of Christ, the priest.

CONTRITION: true sorrow for our mistakes and sins, and a firm resolve not to repeat the sin.

PENANCE: the prayers or actions which lead us to a change of heart.

ABSOLUTION: the words of forgiveness through which Christ forgives us our sins.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen Speaks on Sin

If we lose the Spirit of Christ, we lose a sense of sin. We are living in the first age in the history of Christianity which denies guilt. Almost everyone today is Immaculately Conceived. Dostoevsky warned: "A time is coming when men will say, there is no crime, there is no guilt, there is no sin. There is only hunger. And then come crying and fawning to our feet saying 'Give us bread.' " Souls today are not sinners, they are patients. They have the psychic effects of sin, but are without forgiveness. Sin is not the worst thing in the world; the worst thing is the denial of sin. If I am blind and deny light, I shall never see; if I am deaf and deny sound, I shall never hear. If I am a sinner and deny sin, there is no forgiveness. The denial of sin is the unforgivable sin.

We are never very sad at breaking a law. No one, after exceeding the speed limit, ever leans over their steering wheel to make an Act of Contrition. A world of difference exists between the moralistic attitude toward guilt and the spiritual. This may be illustrated by the way the word "sin" is used in the Scripture, in contrast to the word "sins." When Our Blessed Lord was seen by John the Baptist, he said: "He takes away the *sin* of the world," not sins. Sin here is regarded as a unit, a composite, that which stands in the way of our relationship to God. The sins that we enumerate in our confession with the number, the kind, and the circumstance, represent enfringements of the law, particular violations, special categories of transgressions.

It is the law that stresses the sins, and it is the Holy Spirit that emphasizes sin over and against the holiness of God. It is through such humiliation and through such a conviction of sin that the Holy Spirit gives access to a personal relationship with God, which is the true solution to guilt.

The Holy Spirit instead of putting us in a *legal* relationship with God, puts us into a *personal* relationship. It is even more than a relationship, it is a personal encounter with God. It brings a much greater severity with oneself and, at the same time, a joyous adventure which is endlessly renewed. People often ask: "Is this a mortal sin?" or "How far can I go without committing sin?" Here we have the legalistic concern with what is permissible and what is to be defended.

How then do we come to a sense of sin which is the reason for our double-mindedness and conflict?

Through the Holy Spirit. In His farewell discourse, Jesus told of three effects of the Spirit. The one that is here to the point is: "The Spirit will convict them of wrong, by their refusal to believe in Me" (John 16:8). Not believing in Him ended in His brutal crucifixion. The last and crowning act of sin is the rejection of Him Who made us conscious of sin. Without Him we could sin in peace. With Him, we see sin as the nailing of Goodness to the tree. The individual conscience will be seared and burned by the Spirit to realize that it is not Grade B milk or insufficient playgrounds which cause our ruin, but our own sin.

The Spirit reveals sin to us and even though we deny Him, we know that somehow He remains silent within us. Christ's presence through His Spirit condemns what we do. It is not that He judges us from a distance; He is within us, identifying Himself with us and still not with us. There is no need of formal sentence, no finger-pointing accusation; His Presence alone with us condemns. We feel like displaced persons. Though we know we have stood opposite Him, nevertheless, He stands within us by a miracle of grace.

In a deeply religious soul, the Spirit operates differently than in the lukewarm or the fallen-away. In the latter, what is feared is Judgment: "I may go to hell." In the former where the Spirit of Christ reigns, there is not so much a fear of losing oneself as a sorrow for having hurt One we love. The carnal Christian pounds his breast and says: "Why did I do that? How could I have ever descended to such depths?" The Spirit-infused soul cries out in *creative despair*: "Be merciful unto me, O Lord, a sinner."

The Spirit, if we foster it, sends us with our tensions to the Crucifix. When I look at Jesus on the Cross, I see the story of my life. His Skin is the parchment; the nails the pen; His Blood the ink. In every thorn in that Head I see my pride, my boastings, my superiority complex. In the pierced Feet I read the many times as a lost sheep I wandered among briars from the sheepfold. In His riven Hands I see recounted my greed, my creature-comfort, my incessant reaching out for "more." In His Flesh hanging from Him like purple rags, I see my lust and impurities. In the whole Body I relive all my failings.

+++ Excerpted from +++

Those Mysterious Priests, by Fulton J. Sheen, ©1974