

Lenten Reflection

The Sacrament of Infinite Love and Healing

When we seriously hurt someone whom we love, do we just privately go in our rooms and ask the person to forgive us. Many times, we shyly and humbly approach the person and ask for forgiveness and reconciliation. Only after this is done, we begin to walk the road of true peace, reconciliation and liberation from this painful experience.

This can help us to understand the Sacrament of Confession/reconciliation. Our sins negatively affect the relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. This is done in two ways. When we commit a venial sin, we can ask for forgiveness without experiencing the Sacrament of infinite inner healing/confession/reconciliation. However, a mortal sin is deadly! That is why it is called mortal. It is very different from a venial sin. We break the loving relationship with God in a serious manner. Simply going to our rooms and asking for pardon is not enough to heal the friendship with Jesus; because of the profound seriousness of this deadly sin. I cannot be satisfied in going to my room and pray to receive forgiveness. I am required to go and reconcile with the other person I have hurt - Jesus Christ. Jn 5:16-17 reminds us that we cannot pray for the sin that leads to death. It is too deadly, I am required to go and reconcile with the other person I have hurt - Jesus Christ. All sin is sin. However, there are sins that lead to death. If we cannot pray for these

deadly sins, then what do we do with our deadly sins? How do we receive forgiveness in Jesus' love for these deadly sins? How can we be reconciled again to Jesus, knowing that we cannot pray by ourselves to receive Jesus' forgiveness for these deadly sins? Jesus does not condemn. He loves us too much. He wants to heal us and restore his life of salvation in us. To receive forgiveness for our deadly or mortal sins, we are required to go to the Church and encounter the priest in what is known as the Sacred Sacrament of divine reconciliation. There, through the priest, we encounter Jesus himself. He embraces us, wipes our tears, heals our inner wounds that we have carried for so long....

The Church is the mysterious Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22) on earth. Just entering the Church on a Sunday, we are already experiencing the loving mysterious Body of Christ. Another way of understanding the Church is the Sacrament. There are two parts to the Sacrament - the physical and the divine. The physical can be seen or touched, while the Divine cannot be physically seen. The Priest is not Jesus Christ. However, he stands 'in the person' of Jesus Christ as he administers the Sacred Sacrament of healing and reconciliation and forgiveness.

If you are sick and the Priest rests his hands on you, prays, and you are healed; who has healed you? Surely not the Priest. It is Jesus working through the Priest. Therefore, Jesus works through the priest to forgive us

of your sins. If Jesus can become so humble as a piece of bread at Mass, then what is preventing him from working through the priest to forgive sins of Christians. Is there anything Jesus cannot do to save humanity? Are not all things possible in God? Can we ever underestimate the loving power of Jesus? Jesus himself began this sacrament on the day he resurrected from the dead! As the Father sent Jesus into the world to bring salvation; in the same manner, he sent the disciples out to bring his forgiveness and healing to Christians (Jn. 20: 19-23). The Catholic Church has continued this tradition through its Priests who follow and obey this first command of Jesus. Jesus knows our fragility; our vulnerability. He knows how much pain past hurts, pain and sins can destroy our happiness. Jesus instituted this sacrament of divine love to bring liberation and healing to humanity. We all desire internal peace and healing in Jesus' unconditional love.

The Priest by himself cannot forgive sins! He is a sinner in need of redemption. He can only forgive sins in the NAME of JESUS! Outside of Jesus the priest is nothing as it relates to the forgiveness of mortal sins. The Priest receives this mission through the succession of Peter (Mat. 16: 18-19). In addition, the priest is not ordained in the order of the Levitical priesthood as was the custom of the Old Testament. He is ordained in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 4: 14. 5:1-7, 7: 1-28). Jesus himself established this New Order of the Priesthood. Another important

dimension here is FAITH. The Book of Hebrews 11:1 explains it beautifully- evidence not seen, substance hoped for...

Just as salvation is free, so too is this Sacrament. The sacrament that Jesus began on the day of his resurrection from the dead; (the day he defeated Satan; the day his Divine Light came into the world; the day the stone was rolled away); is awaiting us. Why should we carry so much pain and hurts of the past in our hearts? Jesus is inviting us to come and experience his Divine love on earth. Jesus wants to roll away the stones from our hearts. He only wants to embrace us and heal us in his infinite love.... It is normal and healthy to be a little afraid or nervous, for we are encountering the Divine through a human - the Priest.

We have 40 days to begin this sacred and holy journey.....! May the Blessed Mother wrap us in her mantle, as we humbly encounter the loving warm embrace of Jesus in the Sacrament of healing or confession.

Fr. Esprit fmi - Mission of Saint Francis Xavier