

Divine Mercy Sunday 2008, John 20:19-:31

Going to confession can be a hard thing. My sophomore year of college I went to confession while I was on retreat. It was the first time I had gone since 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and really the first time in my life I'd ever seriously prepared for the sacrament.

In some ways I really had no idea what I was doing. I might have been more nervous trying to remember exactly how long it had been since my last confession...

...5 years and however many months...

...then I was about the fact that I had to tell a priest about the alcohol and dating related mishaps of my freshman year of college.

I was as worried about trying to figure out exactly what I was supposed to say at the beginning...

...as I was about the embarrassment of having to tell a total stranger my biggest mistakes.

I was almost 20 when I made that confession...

...and since it had been so long since I had gone...

...and because when I had gone previously...

...I hadn't really talked about what I really needed to...

...that meant...

...that when I made that confession...

...what I basically did was sum up in a few minutes everything I had done wrong during the entire time I was a teenager.

And...

...the priest didn't breathe fire, he didn't yell at me.

It was all amazingly easy. It was the first time I had ever really brought my sins out into the light that way...

...and really, once I did it, it wasn't that hard of a thing to get done.

We need confession.

If we don't humble ourselves before God in this way...

...how can we truly say we have the sorrow needed to receive his forgiveness?

That's why Jesus gave this gift to the Church.

In our Gospel reading today we just heard Jesus tell his apostles that those whose sins they forgave...

...we're truly forgiven.

Jesus gave ordinary men the authority to forgive sins.

Ultimately it wasn't their authority...

...it was only done through Christ working in them...

...but Christ truly made his apostles the human instruments he would use to share his forgiveness with others.

The Church still possesses what Christ gave to the apostles.

The authority given to the apostles...

...to forgive sins...

...is exercised through priests and bishops.

We need to take advantage of this gift.

I do.

I returned to confession in college after a 5 and a half year interruption...

...but thankfully I've been a little bit more regular about it since then.

Is it hard to go to confession?

Yeah, sure, it can be.

But it's worth it...

...and we all need it.

If you're already going to confession as often as you need to...

...then thank God...

...and keep it up.

If you're not taking care of confession as often you need to...

...then this has to change.

So go.

If it's been a while since you've been and you're not quite sure what to say or do...

...then don't worry...

...the priest will help you through it.

If you're reluctant because you haven't been in such a long time...

...don't worry.

I've heard the confessions of plenty of people who hadn't been since before I was born.

I have yet to yell at anyone...

...or bite anyone's head off.

If you're reluctant because you've done horrible things...

...then you really need to go.

And trust me...

...the priest is going to have heard it before.

If we sincerely confess...

...then no matter what we've done...

...no matter what it is...

...Jesus forgives us.

You might ask what if I don't need to go?

Well confession isn't strictly necessary when we've only committed smaller sins, venial sins as they're referred to...

...but everyone is in at least some danger of drifting away from God...

...and confession of even small faults can be a way of fighting against this.

And also...

...sadly...

...tragically...

...it's pretty much statistically guaranteed that there are people here today who because of what they've done really do need to go to confession...

...and haven't been in far too long.

I'm going to discuss some disturbing and depressing things here...

...things related to how frequently certain sins occur.

The cold hard facts tell us that the vast majority of men at least occasionally view internet pornography.

Women do the same...

...but in numbers that while still depressing aren't as bad as they are for men.

Some sort of sexual infidelity occurs in close to 30% of marriages.

Almost 1 in 4 pregnancies in this country ends in abortion.

I don't even know what the numbers are when it comes to sexual activity among unmarried people.

And let's not forget the problems of drug and alcohol abuse.

Studies show that Christian faith and church participation make some difference when it comes to how likely someone is to struggle with these things...

...but they also show that every sin I just mentioned is a major area of struggle for Christians in the United States.

Unless Sts. Peter and Paul parish is the single most concentrated group of heroically virtuous people that has ever existed...

...then I know there are people here facing serious struggles with at least some of the sins I just mentioned...

...and with other sins that I won't take the time to mention today.

If you're involved with these things...

...don't let sin be your master.

Don't let the Devil run your life.

Go to confession.

Fight back.

You don't have to be a slave to sin.

Jesus has won.

He is risen.

He's triumphed over sin and death.

Share in his victory.

Go to confession...

...and fight with his strength against the sin in your life.

We offer confession here at Sts. Peter and Paul at lunch time on Tuesdays and Saturdays. We offer it on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings. And Thursday mornings for good measure. The exact times are in the bulletin and on the parish website.  
[http://www.sspeterandpaul.net/mass\\_schedule.htm](http://www.sspeterandpaul.net/mass_schedule.htm)

Because (tomorrow) today is Divine Mercy Sunday we're offering confessions at 1:30 (tomorrow) this afternoon as well.

You can also make an appointment with any of the priests here.

If you prefer you can go to another parishes set confession times...

...or make an appointment with a priest at another parish.

For those of you who ever find yourselves in downtown Chicago there is St. Peter's in the Loop on Madison which offers confession 60 something hours a week. You can to St. Peter's in the Loop and have your confession heard by a priest that you'll never have to see again for the rest of your life.

[http://www.stpetersloop.org/service\\_sched.shtml](http://www.stpetersloop.org/service_sched.shtml)

Wherever you go...

...whenever you go...

...just go.

Does everyone here have to go to confession right now?

No.

Do most of us have to go more often than we do?

Yes.

Are there some here who have a serious need to go to confession as soon as possible?

Yes.

Christ has given us the great gift of confession...

...this tremendous gift of the sacrament of reconciliation.

We can share in his triumph over sin...

...his triumph over evil...

...his triumph over Hell...

...his triumph over the Devil...

...if only we're wise enough...

...if only we're humble enough...

...to confess all that we've done wrong.