

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to John (John 20:21-23)

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Why We Confess our sins to a Priest

The Institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). The first important thing Jesus did after resurrection was to institute the Sacrament of Confession. Jesus understands the frailty of our human nature: that we would fall again and again despite our good resolutions. Thus, out of great love and concern for our eternal good, Jesus gave divine authority to the apostles for the forgiveness of sins. Having opened the gates of heaven for us, Jesus gave us this tremendous help in our fight against sin and growth in holiness in our pilgrimage towards our heavenly home.

Sacrament of Confession is the way the Lord points to us for seeking forgiveness of sins after Baptism. Confessing to another mortal being requires humility which the Lord wants to see in our hearts (cf. Matthew 11:29). Telling our sins to the Confessor provides us with the opportunity of confronting our sins squarely and allowing time for the gravity of the sin to sink in. Seeking forgiveness through Confession has its joy. For the one who has just made a good Confession, the hearing of words from the priest that one's sins are forgiven, is a great comfort and assurance. Provided one has not made a bad Confession, one is not left in any doubt as to whether one has obtained pardon from God. *A bad Confession is one in which a serious sin is deliberately hidden and not confessed which renders that Confession and future Confessions invalid and sinful until the hidden sin is confessed (cf. Life in Christ, Revised Edition, Foundation for Adult Catechetical Teaching Aids, pg 195).* A bad confession, the abuse of a sacrament, is a serious sin.

Failure to see ourselves as we really are – sinners in need of healing. *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them (Matthew 13:15).* The question we recall to mind is whether we truly understand the gravity of sin? Do we let our weaknesses, pride and self-love harden our hearts, benumb our conscience and allow ourselves to trivialise sin and live with it? We tend to measure gravity of sin by the impression that fault produces in us. We forget that the gravity of a sin is dependent upon the degree of love that the person whom we offended holds for us. We forget how even our venial sin wounds God's infinite love and goodness, and how it separates us from Him, the One who worked so hard to redeem us from our sins, and the only One who can truly make us happy.

We forget that our sins wound not only ourselves but also the mystical body of Christ, His Church (cf. CCC 1487) and the world (cf. CCC 1844). The poor state of the world today is the result of a collective effect of the sins of humankind as people choose to concentrate on themselves and ignore God, thus opening themselves to evil.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You have shown me in many ways how much I mean to You. Instituting the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a good example. I know I really need this great help in my fight against sin and growth in holiness in my pilgrimage to heaven. I understand nothing less than a miracle happens in the Confessional. A soul, even if it is like a corpse, is brought back to fullness of life through Your infusion of it with Your sanctifying grace. Sins are breaking Your Sacred Heart and You feel the pain due to our sins every day. Help me follow the example of the saints by making frequent Confessions. Through this practice, my conscience will be better formed, I will gain deeper insight into gravity of sin and will be strengthened in my fight against slavery to sin. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, please intercede for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.