Faith Formation Files: Vol. 1, Issue 23 March 24, 2019

I can remember lying on the floor, on my stomach, absolutely mesmerized by the action on the screen. The lights in the room were dimmed. A thunderstorm roared outside. I was completely enthralled and terrorized at the same time. The girl in the blue checkered dress, her little dog, Toto, the Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion, and Tin Man were traveling to Oz to see the wizard. As they struggled to figure out their way, the Wicked Witch of the West kept trying to prevent them from getting there so she could retrieve her sister’s magical, red shoes from Dorothy’s feet. As frightened as I was by the flying monkeys and the struggle where the witch was doused by water, the pinnacle scene included the famous line, “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!” For those of us who’ve seen this movie, we come to realize that the “great wizard” was really a simple man who was pretending to be something grander than he was. This is exactly the *opposite* of what happens during the sacrament of Reconciliation.

While it may appear that you are going into the confessional to speak to a priest, a simple man who is a sinner just like you, he is acting *in persona Christi*, “in the person of Christ.” You are actually speaking directly to Jesus! The priest, through the sacred character of his ordination, is able to act as Christ and transform the ordinary bread and wine into the true body and blood of Christ. He is able to act as Christ to wash away one’s original sin through the sacrament of baptism. He is able to act as Christ to empower the Holy Spirit at confirmation. He is able to act as Christ to promote spiritual (and perhaps even physical) healing during the Anointing of the Sick. If you can recognize the power and presence of Christ in these sacraments, why would you question His presence during your confession?

There are many common sins that get confessed. (Not that Father will share those with me; it is through research and talking to others that I am getting my information.) Among those are lying, being lazy, impatient or judgmental, getting angry, seeking revenge, cursing/saying rude or mean things, indulging in excess food or drink, abusing drugs, gambling, viewing pornography, being manipulative, enabling others, being prideful, and of course, missing Sunday Mass. But in addition to these, I think it’s important to recognize two sins against the Holy Spirit. First, “the sin of presumption, which means that one assumes God will forgive, even without asking, or that one can be saved without God’s help…. This sin cannot be forgiven because the one who commits this sin refuses to ask for forgiveness. Once the sinner asks, the sin can be forgiven.” Second, “the sin of despair, which means that one is convinced that (one’s) sins are so grave that God cannot forgive them, cannot be forgiven because the one who commits this sin refuses to ask for forgiveness. Once the sinner asks, the sin can be forgiven.” (Outlines of the Catholic Faith…based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Leaflet Missal Company, 2000, pgs. 29-30.)

So be thorough in your examination of conscience. Be humble and truly contrite. Recognize that everything we have and everything we are is from God. He already knows our trials, our weaknesses, and our sins, but you need to seek him out, through the priest at Reconciliation, and be unpretentious, apologetic, and truly remorseful for choosing your own desires over Him. That’s what will bring you into right relationship with Him and allow you to have eternal life with Him in heaven. That is what God wants for us. I know that’s what I want because really, “There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home.”

Blessings,

Julie Gould

This Week: faithformation@ctknsf.org

* Sunday, March 24, 3 pm at CTK Church, Howard City: Reconciliation Service
* Sunday, March 24, 4-6 pm at Fellowship Hall: Faith Formation classes- GIFT, bring a dish to pass
* Monday, March 25, 7 pm at Fellowship Hall, Howard City: Adult Enrichment Class
* Thursday, March 26, 9:30 am- 10:30 am at CTK Church: Holy Hour
* Friday, March 27, 9:30 am at SF, Lakeview & 7 pm at CTK, Howard City: Stations of the Cross