Faith Formation Files: Vol. 1, Issue 21 March 3, 2019

For Christmas each year, we always went to Midnight Mass as a family. By the time we’d get home around 1 am, Santa would have already stopped. We’d rush into the house to see the immense pile of packages stacked under and around our artificial tree. Each Christmas was exciting, but this year would turn out to be the best one ever! It was the Christmas of 1981. I can’t say that I even remember a single gift that I received, but my brother, Rick, got the gift of all gifts. Rick opened his present and lo, and behold, a Tomytronics hand-held Pac Man video game. (♪♫ *Hallelujah!!* ♪♫) That toy was the envy of all the kids in the neighborhood, me included. I’d play that thing anytime I could get my hands on it…if I beat him home from school, if he was working at my dad’s welding shop, if he went to the bathroom,…I’m not sure why I loved that game so much, but I did. Since then, I have also received many other great gifts: a horse, a car, jewelry, handmade ornaments from my kids, my grandma’s Dutch oven, and an enclosed trailer for my event planning/catering business. But the greatest gift of all is God’s mercy. He gives us His mercy in many ways. One way is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, also known as Confession or Penance.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by Jesus when He empowered the disciples in John 20:22-23 by “…(breathing) on them and (saying) to them, ‘Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’ “But this is not the only place where there is Biblical evidence of need for confession of one’s sins and reparation. You can see it in Leviticus when sinners are instructed to bring a purification offering to the priest who, acting as a mediator to God, makes atonement for their sins. (5: 5-6 and 19: 20-22) It is referenced throughout the New Testament where people are directed to confess their sins and the Apostles are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. (**Matthew 9: 6-8, Mt. 16: 19, Mt. 18:18, James 5: 14-17, 1 John 1: 9, 2 Corinthians 5: 18)** It is a necessary component of the Jewish celebrations of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, with Judaism being the roots of our Christian religion. In fact, the prayers they pray (Al Chet and Ashamnu) provide among the most thorough examinations of conscience I’ve ever seen.

Many people, even Catholics, like to think they can talk directly to God to ask for forgiveness. We can talk with God about our sins, however if we want to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in union with the Church and receive absolution, we do so with a priest. (Acts 14:23, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Hebrews 13:17) As cited above in John, Jesus empowered priests to forgive. Note that they are given the Holy Spirit meaning God is in them. In the confessional, priests act “in persona Christi”, in the person of Christ. Just as Jesus can make Himself present in the Holy Eucharist, so can He make Himself present through our local priest. Besides, doesn’t it make the sins more real, make you more accountable, if you actually profess them aloud to someone else? If you were to do a direct you-to-God confession, would you really hold yourself to a sufficient level of amends and restitution? Wouldn’t you be a bit biased as to whether or not the sins were truly grievous? Remember that talking aloud to a priest who acts in persona Christi is also very healing. We are sent out into the world to be Christ, to be His disciples. Sometimes we sin; we mess up and we need healing.

While I cannot say that I get excited to go to confession, I do very much enjoy the feeling of freedom and purity that I experience upon absolution. It is important to remember that the “judgment” being given is from God, not the priest. And the judgment is not a subjective decision. It is simply God holding up you and your thoughts, actions, and intentions to the expectations He has given us through the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, the parables, and all other sacred scripture. If you are guilty, it is because you have chosen to sin. You have decided to appease your own wants. You have been selfish in picking yourself over God. But, in His great desire to have us with Him for all eternity, He offers us opportunity after opportunity to get ourselves right, to fix our ways, to live more like Christ. To do so, God has given us the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And I don’t know about you, but I think that’s better than any old toy.

P.S. - The sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at our parish multiple times each week. You can go to confession at CTK, Howard City on Wednesdays from 6-6:30 pm and Saturdays from 4-4:30 pm. It is available at SF, Lakeview on Sundays from 8-8:30 am. Father James will also set up appointments for Reconciliation if those times don’t work for you. We will be offering a Penance Service (with multiple priests present) on Sunday, March 24th at 3 pm in Howard City.

 Blessings,

 Julie Gould

This Week: faithformation@ctknsf.org

* Sunday, March 3, 4-6 pm at Fellowship Hall: A Family of Faith, please bring your books.
* Monday, March 4, 7 pm at Fellowship Hall, Howard City: Adult Enrichment Class
* Wednesday, March 6: Ash Wednesday- 9 am at SF, Lakeview, 7 pm at CTK, Howard City
* Thursday, March. 7, 9:30 am- 4 pm at CTK Church: Eucharistic Adoration
* Friday, March 8, 9:30 am at SF, Lakeview: Stations of the Cross
* Friday, March 8, 4:30-7 pm at Fellowship Hall: Fish Fry
* Friday, March 8, 7 pm at CTK Church: Stations of the Cross
* Saturday, March 9, 9 am at Fellowship Hall, Howard City: Service Saturday- Freezer Meals