

October 9, 2016

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XXXI

Tradition is surprisingly fragile. Once a link of the chain is broken, it is extremely difficult to reattach—and if it effects a second link—almost impossible. What often happens in many disciplines is that an older generation assumes that the younger generation knows how and why certain things are done. We can see this in everything from sports practices to cooking recipes.

As we look to close out our observance of this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, we want to make certain that we sure up the fundamentals—that our resolutions to avail ourselves of the Mercy of God are effective and sustainable for the rest of our lives.

To this end, we will be concluding with the very basic building blocks of a mature person—lessons that our parents drilled into us as children. As we grow and develop our relational skills, the very best thing that we can learn is how to say “I’m sorry” and “thank you”. That is why Jesus gave us the Sacraments of Confession and Eucharist.

“I’m sor-ry, *so* sorry...” (apologies to Brenda Lee!)

In certain segments of society, it is considered a sign of weakness to apologize. This is unfortunate. If you are wrong, you are wrong. If you cannot admit that your behavior may have caused injury, then you better not take offense at anyone who harms you. *Ever*.

To apologize is to acknowledge responsibility and a willingness to try to make amends. It is *not* sycophantic or groveling. Neither is it justifying or in any way explanatory. Justice is on the side of the other and you have to take what is dished out—which is usually highly emotionally charged in the initial moment. That being said, there also must be proportionate boundaries.

If someone thinks of themselves as a ‘victim’ they can never be appeased no matter what you say or do. Why? Since the injury cannot be undone (made never to have happened), restitution literally cannot be made. For someone like this the offense is practically infinite. Their self-identity is caught up in the violation and if they were ever to forgive, they would find themselves in an identity crisis. In this case, it is probably better not to introduce the subject. It will only bring the pain to their mind without being able to accomplish anything positive.

God is not like this in *any* way. He has no desire to punish us. He does not want his “pound of flesh”. He **does** want us to maturely recognize our weaknesses and frequent selfish behavior. He is our Father, and like a good and loving parent, wants us to learn how to be a better person—not give vent to His anger.

Jesus gave us a Sacrament for this purpose. It does two things. 1) Teaches us to apologize. 2) Gives us His healing and help. Next week: a new look at Confession.

Fr. Michael