

October 16, 2016

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XXXII

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: the ability to say “I’m sorry” and “thank you”.

Last week we briefly looked at what it means to apologize and what to expect when doing so. This week, we turn our eye to Confession as the way not only to apologize to God, but to beg His healing and assistance.

The Divine Physician

Jesus is the only complete Healer. There are professions for the healing of the body, but the soul is beyond our intervention. In fact, the greatest healing is that which occurs on the spiritual level. Natural/physical interventions have no such ability.

(Habitual) Sin is the greatest disease—much worse than physical disease. Therefore, the curing of sin is the work only of the Divine Physician. There is no one else who has any ability to do so and His ability comes from the Act of Love in which He died for us. It is by means of Christ’s Passion that He earns the right to forgive and heal our sins.

Next year we will observe 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the Church Door starting the Protestant Revolt. Almost 2.5 centuries earlier, none less than St. Thomas Aquinas wrestled with the mystery of the forgiveness of sins through the Sacrament of Confession. If we follow his thought, the fact of the matter is that our Protestant brothers and sisters are sort of right when they say that they go directly to God to apologize for sinning! As Catholics we need to think on that.

The year before he died, Aquinas was undertaking a study of the Sacraments and the Life of Grace in part III of his Summa Theologica. From many Scriptural examples and from reason he understood that God could forgive our sins directly if He so chooses. If that is the case, this very strongly begs the question of why Jesus gave us the Sacrament of Confession. It must be meant for something more than merely to forgive our sins.

Next week: Bless me father...

*Fr. Michael*