

November 6, 2016

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XXXV

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”.

For the last few weeks we have looked at “I’m sorry”—the importance of being able to maturely own up to the wrong that we have done. We talked about this in terms of all of our relationships, but most especially with God. Jesus gave us a Sacrament for this purpose, but since God can forgive our sins any way that He chooses, there must be more to the Sacrament of Confession.

The “more” is that God has no desire merely to treat our symptomatic sins, but to heal their root causes. That means we need to have a deeper than 2nd Grade level understanding of Confession so that we can open ourselves to this “more”.

We need to do some work and get to the roots of our habitual sins (the vast majority of which are compensation for these ailments). We can then give them to Christ and experience what the saints have referred to as an encounter with Redeeming Love.

This “encounter” is the experience of being forgiven when there is no remedy—far beyond what could be expected or hoped for. It is pure gift and fills us with such gratitude that there are no fitting words or expressions to say thank you. We are reduced to silence in the warm glow of a gentle smile and an embrace by pierced hands to a lanced-open breast. Do you experience Confession that way?

It also helps to prevent us from an alternative where we run to the Sacrament in order to feel better, which very unfortunately, is more akin to using the Sacrament something like toilet paper. When you go to the doctor, would you rather be cured or *feel better*?

As we continue, we will examine how God has also given us a Sacrament that similarly brings us to the depths of “thank you”. In fact, its name (in Greek) is Thanksgiving. This year, our holiday of Thanksgiving and the conclusion of the Year of Mercy are the same week. That is a very happy convergence.

Fr. Michael