



## **From the Pastor's Desk:**

As we continue our journey of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving we ask God to perfect in us our understanding of Confession as a gift of healing. I pray your Lent is going well.

Be sure to check out our confession schedule in your Offertory Envelope package or see the ushers or for a copy of our Holy Week Schedule.

I'm sure you have all heard about the Voluntary Separation Package offered all eligible employees in all parishes throughout the diocese. We will be seeing many changes here at OLPH. The results will require a lot of changes in how we presently administer at various levels of parish support and ministry, but we must do these in order to reach a balanced budget of income verses expenditures. Once we have a grip on the redesign I will publish it here in our bulletin and on our website. Please pray for God's blessings on our work.

### **Returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation: A Guide for Four Sets of Circumstances – PART 3**

#### **# 2: "It's been a long time, but I don't think I do that much wrong."**

*"I suppose my last confession was eight or ten years ago. I sort of got out of the habit. I used to confess the same small sins over and over and I just said, 'What's the use?' I don't commit big sins. I go to Mass every Sunday. I know I'm not perfect. The people I live with and work with would be the first to tell you that. I think I try to do good for my neighbor. I just got away from going to Confession. I just tell the Lord I'm sorry and that's that."*

The message our Lord has for this set of circumstances is an encouragement to enjoy the benefits of the Sacrament of Reconciliation more frequently, as a means to grow in our Lord's grace and his peace. More frequent confession will often lead to a better examination of conscience. It may be the case that we won't have any serious sins to confess - even when we consider what we have failed to do. However, examining how we have fallen short in a variety of areas will usually result in our discovering places we need forgiveness and healing. We can ask for God's grace to shine in our hearts and to free us to love more generously and selflessly. The results are often wonderful: we have a personal experience of renewal that begins a new relationship with our Lord and a daily pattern of prayer with him.

#### **# 3: "I go frequently, but I confess the same serious things over and over again."**

*"I celebrate the Sacrament at least once a month, and sometimes weekly. It's a bit embarrassing because I keep confessing the same pattern over and over again. [Anger and fighting with a spouse or particular person; an ongoing affair; a pattern of pornography use with masturbation; etc.] I know that I intend to have a 'firm purpose of amendment,' but I can't seem to change and I keep coming to Confession because I want to keep going to Communion, but I wonder if I should."*

It is so important to keep coming to the Sacrament. We need God's grace and mercy. Without it, our efforts to stay close to the Lord are even more handicapped. The issue for us is to change our patterns. Some of our patterns might be deeply embedded habits and may require a genuine commitment and the help of others. Others may have become addictions which require therapy or a 12 step program. What starts to change our hearts is to focus on leaving the celebration of the Sacrament with deeper and deeper gratitude. The more we thank our Lord for his love and mercy is easier it is to resist temptation. Secondly, it is very important to put a pattern of prayer in place in our lives so that, throughout the day, we are saying "Loving, Father, my life is in your hands," or "Thank you for your grace today, Lord," or "I trust you will be with me in this challenging situation I face this afternoon." These kinds of "amendments" to our lives will make our celebration of Sacrament lead to effective healing. [Continued next week]

May God +bless you, and yours, now and forever.

*Father Anthony*