**April Chaplain’s Report - 2019**

***“The unexamined life if not worth living”***

***“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*** These words are uttered by the philosopher Socrates in the course of Plato’s “Apology” – Socrates’ final defense before the men of Athens before his impending death. In the course of the Season of Lent this quote comes to my mind time and again as I have the opportunity to hear any number of confessions as people prepare to renew their baptismal promises on Easter Sunday.

The sacrament of confession is made up of several essential components, one important one being a good examination of conscience. Certain things are expected of penitents coming to confession and the celebrant (the priest) hearing said confession too. The ***penitent*** brings to confession: 1) a repentant and contrite heart, 2) an account of their sins (of what they are repenting), and 3) a firm purpose of amendment (an adamant desire to repair the damage done by their sin and others as well). The ***priest*** for his part offers direction and guidance, and if the penitent be properly disposed for it, absolution and the forgiveness of sins.

The examination of conscience, for many, stops at the Ten Commandments (some do not get so far as that). How might we examine ourselves well, or get into the habit of examining ourselves more closely so that the few minutes before we enter the confessional are more fruitfully spent. A few suggestions follow for preparing well for confession.

To begin, we want to take note first of any ***mortal sins*** we may have committed since our last confession. These sins effectively kill the life of grace in us. For a sin to be mortal three things are necessary: 1) the matter is objectively serious/grave, 2) we know it to be so (have made an attempt to be informed or have been informed as such from a credible authority) and 3) we freely choose to do it.

If we are conscious of having committed a mortal sin, we ought to make it to the sacrament as soon as we are able. If we haven’t made it to confession by our next mass/holy communion, we ought to abstain from Holy Communion until we are able to make it and be healed; there are very few exceptional cases where this may not apply.

A good examination of conscience will account for most common mortal sins: missing mass out of laziness or on purpose, extreme fits of anger, willfully drinking to excess, and most everything in the sexual sphere that treats the other as something to be used rather than someone to be loved (pornography, contraception, abortion etc.).

After we have accounted for mortal sins, we want to take stock of those less serious offenses – ***venial sins***. Venial sins wound that life/love God offers us but do not kill it. One may go to confession even if they only have venial sins to confess. Doing so is helpful as such sins can become habits or vices which only open the door to other vices.

St. Ignatius of Loyola the founder of the Jesuits, saw examination as an important part of a fruitful spiritual life. As such, he desired that his priests and those lay faithful who took part in the retreats he led to make a daily ***“Examen”*** or examination of their life***.*** The ***Examen*** prayer is a fairly simply review of one’s day and only takes five to ten minutes to complete. Fr. Michael Gaitley, a popular spiritual author, offers us an acronym that sums up the essential elements of a good examen. That acronym is: ***“B-A-K-E-R”***.

First, ***“B”*** is for “blessings”. We begin by recalling the blessings of the day (good things that we’ve done or we received). ***“A”*** is for “ask”. We ask for the special grace to see our relationship with God and others more clearly – how are things going? ***“K”*** is for “kill”. Kill? Sinful thoughts, words, actions kill the joy God wants us to know as his sons and daughters. We look at our day or the past few hours to account for those moments where we have fallen away from the path God shows us. This is the point we probably spend the most time on in examining ourselves.

***“E”*** is for “embrace”. In this, we acknowledge our guilt but do not beat ourselves up overmuch instead embracing God’s Divine Mercy and love for us – it can be helpful to reflect on the image of Divine Mercy at this time. Lastly, ***“R”*** is for “resolve”. In this moment, we resolve in a particular way to grow in our discipleship more intentionally from here on. We conclude with a simple prayer like the “Our Father” or “Glory Be”.

Making this simple prayer a regular part of our day-to-day devotional life leads to a deeper appreciation of the way God is working in and around our lives as well as the lives of those closest to us. In this way when we come to confession after a few weeks, months, or annually at Easter time we are better prepared to offer a more honest account of our life before our merciful Lord, ready to receive his life and love into our hearts again.

**Practical Tips:**

***1) Make a good Examination of Conscience and get to confession before Easter!***

***2) Confession Times Vary from Parish to Parish but are often increased during Lent.***

* ***St. Robert’s (During Lent)***
  + ***Sat. 3:30PM-4:30PM, Sun. 10:15AM-10:45AM***
  + ***Lenten Penance Service: Monday 4/8 @ 7:00PM***
* ***Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (During Lent)***
  + ***Sat. 8:30AM, 7:00PM-7:30PM***
  + ***Lenten Penance Service: Wednesday 4/10 @ 7:00PM***
* ***Our Lady of Czestachowa*** 
  + ***Mon.-Sat. 11:00AM-12:00PM (Before/During Mass)***
  + ***Sat. 5:00PM (During Mass)***
  + ***Sun. 9:00AM, 11:00AM, 2:30PM, 5:00PM***

***(During Each Mass)***

**Coming Up:**

***April***

* Divine Mercy Sunday – April 28, 2019
  + *Special Plenary Indulgence* available to those who:
    - in any church or chapel, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honor of Divine Mercy
    - **or**, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!")
    - *Also* must fulfill other normal conditions:
      * Sacramental Confession (within 20 days before or after indulgenced act)
      * Eucharistic Communion (on day or days before or after)
      * Prayer for Intention of Holy Father (Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be may suffice)

***May***

* World Day of Prayer for Vocations – May 12, 2019
  + Pray especially for current vocations (from St. Robert’s, Benjamin Speranza) and future vocations!
* Mother’s Day – May 14, 2019
  + Pray especially for present mothers and those expecting. Remember those women in crisis pregnancy situations and their families.
* Ascension Thursday – May 30, 2019
  + Holy Day of Obligation