



From the Pastor
6th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
February 12, 2023

EUCCHARISTIC CALL TO CONVERSION. After a month-long break from our series on the USA Bishops' **National Eucharistic Revival** document: **The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church**, we

continue with part 23. With **Ash Wednesday** a week and a half away, these **pre-Lent days** are the perfect time to reflect on the document's next section with is entitled '**Conversion.**' This 3-year revival's goal is to enable us to better understand and celebrate our **Lord's Real Presence** in the **Eucharist**. For past articles on this **Revival** and our Bishop's teachings, go to our parish website - stjustin.org.

REPENT! One of the two options for imposing ashes echoes what **Jesus** said at the start of His public ministry: "**Repent, and believe in the Gospel.**" [Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15] That is why we normally begin **holy Mass** with a **Penitential Act** [the **Confiteor** or **Invocations** imploring mercy] or the **Rite of Sprinkling**, which recalls the waters of **Baptism** which washes away all sins. It is also why, right before we receive **Holy Communion**, we humbly confess: "**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**" None of these prayers, our penitential deeds, or penances are intended to be unhealthy, punitive self-incriminations; we never confess our sinfulness without also acknowledging **God's** compassion, forgiveness, love and above all, His mercy!

Ideally, and by liturgical norm, we do all this under an image of **Christ crucified** to help us remember that **Jesus** already paid the price for our sins; **Jesus** already redeemed us; **Jesus** has reconciled us to **God** and to one another ... however ... we are still a 'work-in-progress.' We have failed to fulfill our **Baptismal Promises**; we do not keep the **Commandments**; we do not live by the **Beatitudes**; we have not become another **Christ**. Nor have we been faithful to our part of the deal we make with **God** each time we pray the **Lord's Prayer**: do we really want **Our Father in heaven** to forgive us ... as we forgive our brothers and sisters on earth? We pray, "**lead us not into temptation**" - but go there ourselves!

CONVERSION: A NEVER-ENDING PROCESS! Because of human weakness, we can never say we have reached perfection; however, we can never stop seeking our goal, which was bluntly proclaimed by **Jesus**: "**... be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" [Matthew 5:48] So, with eyes and minds fixed on **His Body** broken for us, and **His Blood** poured out for us, we seek **His forgiveness** for our sins and **His strength** to avoid sinning in the future. This is also why the regular, weekly reception of the great gift of **Eucharist** is so crucial, so essential, so important that we are **OBLIGATED** to receive **Holy Communion** at least once a year - and to **confess our sins** beforehand IF we are guilty of any serious, grave or mortal sins. This is where it gets kind of 'messy.'

TWO TYPES OF SIN. In his first Letter, an **Apostle** makes this interesting distinction: "**All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly.**" [1 John 5:17] Based on this, our **Catholic Faith** teaches that there are **two types of sins**; one type we call '**VENIAL**' sins - and the other we call the dreaded '**MORTAL**' sins. While **ALL** sin **damages** our relationship with **God** and/or with one another, all sins do not **rupture** or **break off** our ability to interact with **God** and/or each other. Our **venial** sins, or everyday faults and failings, make life challenging and our interactions more difficult - but they do not destroy our ties or the bonds that unite us. Our **mortal** sins, unless rectified, do irreparable damage and extinguish our relationship with **God** and/or others! That is why there is a particular 'medicine' for each type of sin.

VENIAL SINS. As numerous **Popes** have taught, **Holy Communion** is **NOT** a prize for being sinless or a reward for good people; it is the 'medicine' that helps us avoid committing venial, 'everyday' sins - and even washes them away! So does the **Penitential Act** and **Rite of Sprinkling** at **holy Mass**, our own prayers for forgiveness, and our acts of mercy or charity towards others. For as yet another **Apostle** proclaimed: "**Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.**" [1 Peter 4:8] Next week: what to do if we are guilty of serious, grave or '**mortal**' sin.

In Christ,

Father Mark