

## THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

These last few days I've celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a large number of people, mostly teens. This includes my being at the Archdiocesan Catholic Youth Convention, our parish's Reconciliation service, and helping with confessions at St. Ignatius school.

I have learned something (again) about our teens. They came to me a ACYC from Our Savior, St. Bede, and other places, in total honesty. They were transparent almost to a fault (if it is not inappropriate to state it this way in the context of confession!). This was true again in our parish's celebration, where 90% of all the confessions I heard were from our youth. It was emphasized yet again during 8<sup>th</sup> grade confessions at St. Ignatius. Over and over I thought, 'Would these young people's parents have been this utterly open and honest when they were this young? Would they be this open and honest now?' The fact that I can ask this question might give some of the older folks in the parish pause to examine their own quality of examination of conscience. And I pray that if the answer is not 'yes' in the past, it will be 'yes' in the future.

I also heard, from youth and adults, standard comments like 'My last confession was 2, 4, 7... years ago.' They and I know that's unmanageable. But it's not because we want a morbid sense of guilt or self-condemnation to dominate people. Rather, it's like the analogy I mentioned to some of them: I was driving to Chicago this past summer and was navigating in Nashville, trying to get off I-65 to I-24 and ultimately I-57 to Chicago. I made a wrong connection and was heading down I-40 west. I was constantly checking myself, and when I was pretty sure I'd headed down the wrong road I pulled off to consult my map. I was right—I was wrong! So I turned around and doubled back, getting properly to I-24. But if I hadn't taken the time to check, I'd have wound up (perhaps) in Memphis. Reconciliation is like that: a way to double-check where I'm heading spiritually: toward or away from Jesus, and how. The more frequently I check, the less likely it is that I'll get too far wrong before being able to correct myself. So I have recommended to them (and I do so now for anyone) that they consider the Sacrament of Reconciliation 3-4 times a year, rather than once every 3-4 years.

For those who were at our parish's Reconciliation service on the 13<sup>th</sup>, I hope the Examination of Conscience was of help. For those who were not, I will post it here on the web-site. May our Lenten commitment be truly carried over into our lives, that our journey to Jesus will take fewer (and less serious) wrong turns since we are checking our 'road-map' that much more often.