

The Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time *October 28, 2018*

“Many people think of confession as something that was introduced by the Catholic Church. That’s true, in a sense, because confession is a sacrament of the New Covenant, and so it could not be established until Jesus sealed that covenant with His blood (Mt 26:27). But in the tradition of Israel, to which Jesus was faithful, the enactment of the covenant always contained provisions for the remission of sins.” (Scott Hahn, Lord Have Mercy, p. 24)

Today, we will examine the last of the Seven Sacraments of our Catholic Church - Reconciliation (Confession). To understand this beautiful sacrament, we must first understand what sin is and how it affects our relationship with both God and each other.

A basic definition of sin could be: Sin is a transgression against the love of God committed after our baptism. This transgression is either mortal (destroys our relationship with God) or venial (weakens our relationship with God). Due to the fact that we are all connected within the Body of Christ, as your finger is connected to your hand, no sin is private, meaning it only affects us. We can get an infection if we cut our finger. This infection can affect not only our finger, but our hand and other areas of our body as well. Our Lord knew the effects sin would have upon each one of us. Therefore, as a doctor treats an infection with medication, Our Lord established a remedy to treat the infection of sin.

This treatment of sin and its effects must always begin the same way: we must first acknowledge that we are sick (we have sinned). If we were to turn in our Bible to the very beginning, the book of Genesis, we can see how God began mankind’s treatment. After Adam and Eve had sinned, what are the first questions God asked them? *“Where are you?”* (Genesis 3:9) *“Who told you that you were naked?”* (Genesis 3:11) *“Why did you do such a thing?”* (Genesis 3:13) If you notice, God did not chastise Adam or Eve for choosing something against His command. He wanted them to say to Him: **I have disobeyed You, I am truly sorry.** He would proceed to teach them, and us, a valuable lesson. Their sin had affected not only their relationship with Him, but it had also affected their relationship with each other and everything around them (Genesis 3:14-24). You will also notice that Adam took the opportunity to blame Eve. He not only blames his wife but proceeds to blame God for his choice: *“The woman whom You put here with me - she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it.”* (Genesis 3:12) The infection could not be cured since the patient refused to admit their sickness. Sadly, we still offer to God the similar excuses when we blame others, the circumstances we found ourselves in, or the way we were raised.

In the Old Testament, God begins formalizing a process in which mankind could seek forgiveness for acts committed against both God and neighbor. The Book of Leviticus records various offerings, types and numbers, which were to be given to God - **Guilt Offerings** (Leviticus 5:14-26). The process will be very familiar to any of us who have gone through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. *“We need to say ‘I’m sorry’; we need to show it; and we need to do something about it.”* (Scott Hahn, Lord Have Mercy, p. 30). If you notice, God dictates that the sacrifice, an animal, be offered through the intercession of the priest. Please understand, for someone to publicly offer an animal sacrifice at this time would be a serious thing, especially if

that animal was needed for the person's livelihood. This was meant to convey the serious nature of the offense.

In our next examination of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we shall study how Jesus's life and teaching would modify this understanding and how Confession would develop within our Catholic Church Tradition.