

HOMILY
4th Sunday of Lent
March 22

In the past, in Austria, when the Emperor died and his funeral arrived outside the church, the mourners knocked at the door of the church. A priest inside would ask "Who is it?" A guard would call out, "His apostolic majesty, the emperor". The priest would answer, "I don't know him." They would knock a second time, and again the priest would ask who it was. The funeral guard outside would announce, "The highest emperor." A second time the priest would say, "I don't know him." A third time they would knock on the door and the priest would ask "Who is it?" The third time the answer would be, "A poor sinner, your brother."

That true story reminds us of the fact that we are all sinners no matter what our rank in society or Church. Perhaps we don't think of ourselves very often as sinners in need of God's mercy. Archbishop Fulton Sheen said that in the past Catholics believed Our Lady was immaculately conceived but that now everybody believes they are immaculately conceived—that they are without sin.

What is our attitude to the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Sometimes this sacrament is treated as a joke and joked about. Why would people treat the Sacrament of Reconciliation so disrespectfully or make it the subject of jokes? Is it because we have forgotten the value of this sacrament? And if we have forgotten the value of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is that because we have forgotten that we are all sinners even if we pretend otherwise? Is what Archbishop Fulton Sheen said true, that in the past Catholics believed Our Lady was immaculately conceived but now we believe we are all immaculately conceived—without sin? Another way of asking that question is "Are we blind to our sinfulness and our need of God's mercy?"

In the Gospel today, Jesus healed the blind man. Every miracle of Jesus is meant to teach us something. This miracle of the healing of the blind man teaches us that Jesus came to cure our spiritual blindness. There were other people in the Gospel who could see yet they were spiritually blind. These were the Pharisees. Is it possible that we may have a blind spot with regard to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and our need of God's mercy? Today—when we are deprived of the Lord in the Eucharist, when we cannot go to Mass, when the Lord has permitted our world to be afflicted with this virus—let us go to the Pool of Siloam. Let us wash our spiritual eyes so we can see what the Lord's will is for each of us. Let us begin going to Confession once a month.

We have no idea of the enormous graces God gives us when we receive this beautiful sacrament of mercy. When we confess our sins the blood of Jesus flows over us from the Cross on Calvary and cleanses us. We believe that during Mass Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary is extended through time to us; and in the same way, when we receive Jesus' forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that forgiveness is flowing to us from Calvary. In this sacrament of Confession we receive not only forgiveness but strength for living the Christian life. This is what Jesus said to St. Faustina about the Sacrament of Reconciliation,

"[In this sacrament] ... the greatest miracles take place and are [ceaselessly] repeated. It [is enough] to come with faith to the feet of my representative [the priest] and to reveal to him one's misery and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint there would be no hope of restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full. When you go to confession, know this, that I myself am waiting for you in the confessional; I am only hidden by the priest, but myself act in the soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of

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Mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great there is no limit to my generosity."

Jesus also said to St. Faustina the greater the sinner the greater the mercy.

"Summon all those to confidence in the incomprehensible depth of my mercy for I desire to save all. The well of mercy was opened wide with a lance on the cross for all souls. I do not exclude anyone."

Jesus said,

"Tell ailing mankind to draw close to my merciful heart and I will fill them with peace. Mankind will not find consolation until it turns with confidence to my mercy and love."

Jesus also said,

"I desire the confidence of my people. Let not even the weak and very sinful fear to approach me, even if their sins be as numerous as all the sand of the earth all will be forgiven in the fathomless pit of my mercy."

When we receive the sacrament what we heard in our second reading is true of us,

"You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth. Try to discern what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness."

When the funeral of the ruling family in Austria arrived at the church, at the third knock the priest would call out again, Once again 'Who is it?' The third time the answer would be, 'A poor sinner, your brother.' Do you believe you are a sinner? Or do you and I have a blind spot with regard to the Sacrament of Reconciliation? If we have, we are missing out on huge, huge graces. Now is the time for us to go to the Pool of Siloam to wash and be filled with the light of Jesus who is the light of the world.

You can go to Confession this weekend, March 21/22, Saturday at 5:15PM; Sunday 9AM & 12:15PM.