

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

Making a good Confession is a wonderful way to prepare for a truly joyful celebration of Christmas. Jesus Christ came to free us from the slavery of sin and the burden of guilt that it lays upon us. So giving up that weight by receiving the gift of Christ's forgiveness shows a real understanding of His mission. In order to make a good confession we should prepare ourselves by recognizing not only the specific sins we have committed but also the sinful attitudes or dispositions which are the roots of our sins. By way of example, a fever is a symptom of an unseen infection. If we are going to get well it is not enough to simply treat the fever. The infection must be dealt with as well. Very often, our sinful actions are only the symptoms of more deeply rooted sinful attitudes or vices that can infect our souls. For example, my critical attitude toward others may stem from the vice of pride on my part.

Our Advent Penance Service is this Wednesday at 7:00pm. We will have three visiting priests, including Fr. K., to hear Confessions. Come and receive the best Christmas gift of all, peace with God. If you can't make our Penance Service, there will be one at St. Peter's at 5:00pm on Sunday, December 21 and at Our Lady Help of Christians on Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. Of course we also have times for Confession here seven days a week. In addition, I will be hearing Confessions after all Masses next Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. Attached is an Examination of Conscience which I hope you will find helpful in preparing to go to Confession before Christmas.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

### EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

- Do I recognize God's authority over my life, or do I follow my own agenda, fitting God in when it is convenient? Do I give the Lord a chance to speak to me by taking the time for daily prayer?
- Am I grateful for the people God has given me to love? Do I make conscious efforts to make their lives better or do I think only about what they can do for me? Do I initiate acts of kindness toward my coworkers and neighbors? Am I humble in my dealings with others?
- Have I shown compassion for others? Have I taken action to respond to the needs of the poor, the sick and the suffering?
- Have I let myself be controlled by my passions and moods? When I am upset or sad do I seek peace and healing from God instead of feeling sorry for myself? Do I really believe that the Lord is taking care of us or do my anxieties reveal a lack of faith?
- Have I forgiven everyone who has injured or offended me or do I relish my anger because makes me feel superior to them?
- Do I reverence the gift of sexuality and recognize that each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit? Do I degrade myself and others by impure thoughts and actions?
- Do I recognize the importance of honesty? Do I employ deception in order to get my way or avoid difficult situations?
- Am I grateful for the blessings I have received or am I jealous of others? Am I too concerned about having money and material things?

## MANNERS AT MASS

**Attire:** The idea of "Sunday best" should be honored; churchgoers of all ages should dress in a manner which reflects our respect for the importance of the Mass. Coat and dress shirt is appropriate for men. Women should wear modest dress. Tank tops, very short skirts, low cut necklines, exposed midriffs or tight-fitting clothing are disrespectful. Additionally, shorts are not appropriate for either men or women to wear to church. The same holds true for "sweat suits."

**Arrival:** Arrive at least 10 minutes before Mass begins. This helps reduce distractions and provides time to get settled. Late comers should wait to be seated by ushers so as not to disrupt the service and the congregation.

***Gum or candy should never be in your mouth while at Mass.***

**Entering the church:** Once you enter the church from the foyer, please refrain from over socializing with your friends. Remember that others are already engaged in prayer in their seats. Remember to genuflect as you enter your pew as a sign of respect for the Blessed Sacrament. If you are unable to genuflect you should bow to the tabernacle before taking your seat. As a courtesy to those who arrive after you, move to the center of the row.

**Quiet time:** Turn off cell phones and pagers. It is understandable that children have difficulty sitting quietly, but when they become distracting, take them out briefly until they settle down. Also, we do have a "crying room." Please note, this room is meant for the use of families with small children.

**Sign of Peace:** People usually shake hands briefly or exchange a quick kiss—*that is if they're married or family*. But if you would rather not shake hands, it is perfectly acceptable to simply smile to those next to you and say "Peace be with you."

**Consecration:** The elevation of the Host and the Chalice after the words of consecration are spoken is a very sacred time, and there should be silent reverence with no movement around the church except in an emergency (*i.e. your hair is on fire*).

**Communion:** Again, refrain from socializing when leaving the row to receive Communion. Receive the Holy Eucharist with reverence, bow slightly and respond "Amen." When you return to your place remember to say a prayer of thanks to the Lord for giving Himself to you in the Holy Eucharist.

**Leaving the church:** Please do not leave Mass before it is over unless it is an emergency (see above). Also, singing the closing hymn is still part of the Mass. Leaving before the hymn ends is inappropriate. After the hymn, genuflect (or bow) toward the altar before leaving.