



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

September 2019

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INSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL: WHAT IS IT LIKE FOR A PRIEST?

By Fr. Mike Schmitz

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A college chaplain talks about "the most joyful, humbling and inspiring place in the world"

I was once riding on a shuttle-bus with a number of older folks on the way from an airport. They noticed I was a priest and started asking questions.

"Do you do all of the priest stuff?"

"Yep."

"Even the confession thing?"

"Yeah. All the time."

One older lady gasped. "Well, I think that would be the worst. It would be so depressing hearing all about people's sins."

I told them it was the opposite. There is almost no greater place to be than with someone when he or she is coming back to God.

I said, "It would be depressing if I had to watch people leave God; I get to be with them when they come back to him."

The confessional is a place where people let God's love win. The confessional is the most joyful, humbling and inspiring place in the world.

What do I see during confession?

I think there are three things.

First, I see the costly mercy of God in action.

I get to regularly come face to face with the overwhelming, life-transforming power of God's love. I get to see God's love up-close, and it reminds me of how good God is.

Not many folks get to see the way in which God's sacrifice on the cross is constantly breaking into people's lives and melting the hardest hearts.

Jesus consoles those who are grieving their sins ... and strengthens those who find themselves wanting to give up on God or on life.

As a priest, I get to see this thing happen every day.

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FEASTS FOR SEPTEMBER

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of September are:

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| 1 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday | 22 Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday |
| 3 St. Gregory the Great, Memorial | 23 Pio of Pietrelcina, Memorial |
| 5 St. Teresa of Calcutta, Opt. Mem. | 2 Cosmas and Damian, Opt. Mem. |
| 8 Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday | 27 Vincent de Paul, Memorial |
| 9 Peter Claver (USA), Memorial | 28 Wenceslaus; Lawrence Ruiz and Companions; St. Simón de Rojas O.SS. (Spain), Opt. Mem. |
| 12 Most Holy Name of Mary, Opt. Mem. | 29 Twenty-Six Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday |
| 13 John Chrysostom, Memorial | 30 Jerome, Memorial |
| 14 Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Feast | |
| 15 Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday | |
| 16 Cornelius and Cyprian, Memorial | |
| 17 Robert Bellarmine, Opt. Mem. | |
| 19 Januarius, Opt. Mem. | |
| 20 Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang and Companions, Memorial | |
| 21 Matthew, Feast | |

The feasts of the Birth of Mary (September 8), Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15), and Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael (September 29) are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. ☐

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

to our 2000 Hail Mary Devotion Sponsors

<p><u>Las Vegas, Nevada</u> September 14, 2019 Billy & Nicet Santos</p>	<p><u>Los Angeles, California</u> September 21, 2019 Nona Alapag Marilyn Batino Mildred Maramag Sylvia Melendez Alice Ng Carolina Pineda</p>
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OUR CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with God
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures*

THE REASONS WHY TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF GOD WE MUST SURVIVE

JAMES 1:12

GALATIANS 6:9

HEBREWS 10:35-36

ISAIAH 55:8-9

JEREMIAH 29:11

GOD TOUCHED ME

ANOTHER FAVOR FROM GOD

by Debbie Lorenzo, a devotee

In 2016, I worked for a company through a staffing agency as an onsite contractor. My position there was Production Assistant with part time hours, working on weekends and sometimes having weeks off with no pay. I was struggling with paying the household bills with hardly any money to spare.

A little before Christmas in 2018, a lady I met at the church choir group, told me that she was opening a daycare center reaching out to the Chinese clientele. Since I spoke Chinese, she asked me if I wanted to work for her. She was looking at the center to open around February 2019. I prayed for guidance and promptings from the Holy Spirit. As of June this year, the center was still not ready pending some building inspection requirements. I thought to myself, God has a reason for this and I know it is for the good of my soul.

Meanwhile, at the place where I work, a Quality Control position was posted. I inquired about it and told my manager that I was interested. I sent in my application. However, I did not hear any more about it.

Around the first week of May, an Inventory Control position was posted. I inquired about it again, but did not send in my application. Then, my manager approached me and told me to submit my resume because the Director of Safety recommended me for the position. Several weeks before that, I have worked at the Director's office doing some clerical duties. I also gave suggestions and recommendations that appealed to him.

During this time, my co-worker's mother who lives in the Philippines was ill and needed money for her medical expenses and ongoing medications. I told my co-worker who is also a very good friend, that if my financial situation will get better, I will help her. In my prayers, I also pledged the same to the Virgin Mother and asked her to help my friend and co-worker.

Around the first week of June, my manager gave me the good news. I was offered a new position as Inventory Control with full time hours and with weekends off. I'm still working for the same staffing agency but my hours are now full time hours with the guarantee that there will be no lay off for this position during the slow season. Since I used to have Wednesdays off volunteering at church and also joining the rosary makers, I asked my manager if I could work 10 hours for 4 days and still have Wednesdays off for my volunteer work. Fortunately, with the help of Divine Providence, my request was

approved.

Reiterating my thanks to God for this great gift because now my financial situation has improved and I can help my friend financially. At the same time, I still have my Wednesdays off for church volunteer work, and most of all, I can attend our weekend prayer devotions at the Cenacle House.

To God be the glory!!!!☐



SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

SEEKING INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS THROUGH THE BIBLE

CRYING OUT TO GOD ALMIGHTY

by Victor H. Araneta



We are like thermostats set at a specific temperature and the wind always at our back. In other words, we enjoy a level path, sustained contentment and favorable conditions.

Adversity disrupts our controlled environment. We rise and fall on the doctor's reports, sink and soar on the response to our resumes. Afflictions barge into our well-appointed world, overturning our carefully crafted plans. But the intrusion of

difficulty cultivates a ripe climate of spiritual growth.

When bad things happen, we cry out to God. The psalms in particular are redundant with pleas and petitions for God's help. Crying out to God admits our helplessness and weakness, and confesses our dependence on Him alone. As nothing else does, adversity causes us to realize our need for God. In so doing, we learn to listen. Spiritual ears that were dull in contentment and ease become suddenly sensitized to God's Word in time of crisis.

Our Lord, never failing to listen, leans on His throne and opens His ears to the wailing and groping creation asking for a stand-alone audience.

Prayer: My Lord, as I turn myself to you with mercy, open your heart to my plea of recompense. My life is in agony and with the numerous times I have encountered this misery, such are the number of times I never learn to admit my fault. I ask you, my God, to open my heart and understand this trial not from someone's point of view but from my own understanding and humble acceptance in Jesus' name. AMEN. ☐

I am your Mother Mary.

Pray my children for the unborn prevented by unscrupulous individuals who harvest them like evil locusts and devour them at their pleasure. Pray my children, soon the world will see the light and the unborn will be safe again.

And these individuals will be devastated because they will never get the chance to pray.

God listens to our prayers and in the end, His hand of justice will prevail.

*Pray, pray, pray
my children for this will happen soon
and pass that will shock the world.*

Mary, Your Lady of the Rosary
08082019

UPCOMING EVENTS

TOY DRIVE FOR THE LOS ANGELES CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PLEASE DROP OFF YOUR NEW UNWRAPPED TOYS EVERY 1ST AND 3RD SATURDAYS AT THE CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE MASTER

THE APPARITION JOURNEY WITH THE BLESSED ONE

[IN IRELAND, BELGIUM, GERMANY, & AUSTRIA]

DECEMBER 8 – 17, 2019

DAILY ACTIVITIES AND OTHER INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE AT WWW.SPIRITUALARMYOFGOD.ORG

INSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL . . .



I see a saint in the making.

The second thing I see is a person who is still trying — a saint in the making.

I don't care if this is the person's third confession this week; if he or she is seeking the sacrament of reconciliation, it means the person is trying.

That's all I care about.

This thought is worth considering: going to confession is a sign that you haven't given up on Jesus.

This is one of the reasons why pride is so deadly.

I have talked with people who tell me they don't want to go to confession because their priest really likes them and "thinks I'm a good kid."

I have two things to say to this.

1. He will not be disappointed! What your priest will see is a person who is trying! I dare you to find a saint who didn't need God's mercy! (Even Mary needed God's mercy; she received the mercy of God in a dramatic and powerful way at her conception. Boom. Lawyered.)

2. So what if the priest is disappointed? We try to be so impressive with so much of our lives. Confession is a place where we don't get to be impressive. Confession is a place where the desire to impress goes to die.

Think about it: all other sins have the potential to cause us to race to the confessional, but pride is

the one that causes us to hide from the God who could heal us.

Do I remember your sins? No!

So often, people will ask if I remember people's sin from confession. As a priest, I rarely, if ever, remember sins from the confessional. That might seem impossible, but the truth is, sins aren't all that impressive. They aren't like memorable sunsets or meteor showers or super-intriguing movie — they are more like the garbage.

And if sins are like garbage, then the priest is like God's garbage man. If you ask a garbage man about the grossest thing he's ever had to haul to the dump, maaaaaybe he could remember it. But the fact is, once you get used to taking out the trash, it ceases to be noteworthy; it ceases to stand out.

Honestly, once you realize the sacrament of reconciliation is less about the sin and more about Christ's death and resurrection having victory in a person's life, the sins lose all their luster, and Jesus' victory takes center stage.

In confession, we meet the life-transforming, costly love of God ... freely given to us every time we ask for it.

We meet Jesus, who reminds us, "You are worth dying for ... even in your sins, you are worth dying for."

Whenever someone comes to confession, I see a person who is deeply loved by God and who is saying he or she loves him back.

That's it, and that's all.

In Confession, I see my own weakness.

The third thing a priest sees when he hears confessions is his own soul.

It's a scary place for a priest.

I cannot tell you how humbled I am when someone approaches Jesus' mercy through me.

I am not over-awed by their sins; I am struck by the fact that they have been able to recognize sins in their life that I have been blind to in my own.

Hearing someone's humility breaks down my own pride. It is one of the best examinations of conscience.

But why is confession a scary place for a priest? Because of the way in which Jesus trusts me to be a living sign of his mercy.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once told priests that we scarcely realize what is happening when we extend our hands over someone's head in absolution.

We don't realize, he said, that the very Blood of Christ is dripping from our fingers onto their heads, washing the penitent clean.

The day after I was ordained, we had a little party, and my dad stood up and made a toast. He has worked his entire life as an orthopedic surgeon, and he was a very good one.

My whole life, his patients have come up to me at one time or another and told me how their lives have been changed because my dad was such a good surgeon.

So there my dad was, standing in the midst of these people, and he said, "My whole life, I have used my hands to heal people's broken bodies. But from now on, my son Michael ... um, Father Michael ... will use his hands [at this point, he got choked up] ... he will use his hands to heal broken souls. His hands will save even more lives than mine have."

Confession is such a powerful place. All I have to do is offer God's mercy, love and redemption ... but I don't want to get in Jesus' way. The priest stands in judgment of no one. In the confessional, the only thing I have to offer is mercy.

I get to sacrifice for you.

Lastly, when a priest hears confessions, he is taking on another responsibility.

One time, after college, I was returning to confession after a long time and a lot of sin and the priest simply gave me something like "one Hail Mary" as my penance.

I stopped. "Um, Father ...? Did you hear everything I said?"

"Yes, I did."

"Don't you think I should get a bigger penance than that?"

He looked at me with great love and said, "No. That small penance is all that I'm asking of you." He hesitated and then continued, "But you should know ... I will be fasting for you for the next 30 days."

I was stunned. I didn't know what to do. He told me that the catechism teaches that the priest must do penance for all those who come to him for confession. And here he was, embracing a severe penance for all of my severe sins.

This is why confession reveals the priest's own soul; it reveals his willingness to sacrifice his life with Christ.

He sees our sins as a burden that he will take up (with Jesus!) and offer them to the Father, while offering us the mercy of God.

Remember, confession is always a place of victory. Whether you have confessed a particular sin for the first time, or if this is the 12,001 time, every confession is a win for Jesus.

And I, a priest, get to be there.

That's what it's like ... I get to sit and watch Jesus win his children back all day.

It's flippin' awesome. ☐

Fr. Mike Schmitz is the director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Duluth and the chaplain for Newman Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Every Sunday at Mass his homilies are recorded and are available on bulldogcatholic.org or iTunes.