



THE PASTOR'S DESK

April 11, 2010 - Confession and Struggles

Dear Parishioners,

Happy Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday ! The Church is still in the Easter season, celebrating the Resurrection of Our Lord. The week before Easter Sunday, I started to present to you some thoughts on couple of issues that come up in confession: past sins and struggles. Here is the continuation, this week I will share some things about "struggles".

Confessing Struggles

I found an article, written by a priest, which contained a list of do's and don'ts for going to confession. The first "don't" is "don't confess struggles." This may see strange to us. We have so many struggles. But, the very fact that we struggle means that God's grace is working in us. Do you struggle with pride? So did St. Ignatius Loyola and the Little Flower. Do you struggle with anger? So did St. Francis de Sales. Do you struggle with purity? So did St. Damian the Leper. Do you struggle to love the difficult and troublesome? So did St. Catherine of Siena. All the saints struggled with holiness. The fact that you are struggling to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect is a sign that you are on your way to Heaven.

What we need to confess are the times when we failed in the struggle. Sins are concrete; they are the times we sin "in our thoughts, in our words, in what we have done and in what we have failed to do." A good confession will be concrete; it will relate concrete actions or omissions. This is the path to holiness.

Well then, what about our struggles? These are the things you bring to Jesus at Mass. Many times we think we are distracted at Mass because our minds are on other things. If our minds are on our next meal, or the game we're going to that afternoon then, yes, that's a problem. But if our minds are on a sick child or relative, difficulties at work or at home, a loved-one who's faith is wavering, our own health problems, our own spiritual struggles, etc. we are *not* distracted. In fact, these are the things we offer up at the Mass and in receiving Holy Communion. Please realize that holiness comes from struggling to bring God's love to a sinful world. This *is* a struggle and one, I hope, we are all engaged in. Our love for others shows itself in our concern for their good. Bringing and offering these concerns, and the struggles we have in loving God in the concrete situations of our lives, is the deepest form of participation at Mass.

When you go to confession, look at where you struggle but then look to where you failed in that struggle. If your struggle is with patience, then when

did you lose your patience? If your struggle is purity, then when did you entertain something impure? If your struggle is with your temper, then when did you lose your temper? If your struggle is with loving the difficult and troublesome, when did you neglect to love them or seek to avoid them? You may actually find over time that you no longer struggle in that same area. But, the Lord may then show you another area of struggle of which you were unaware.

Confessing the struggles in our spiritual lives can actually inhibit our growth in holiness. They can make confession routine. We can also fail to see the progress that the Lord is doing in our lives. If we routinely confess our struggles, then we may miss the fact that we didn't fail in that particular struggle since our last confession. If we routinely confess, for example, a struggle with patience we may miss the fact that we did not actually lose our patience. One of the greatest consolations in the spiritual life is to make a good examination of conscience and to realize that we did not fall in the area in which we have been struggling.

Confession is a wonderful sacrament for growth in holiness. When we confess the concrete sins of our life we then experience God's mercy even more concretely. We are, then, open to progress in our growth in holiness and have more reason to give glory to God.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**

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Summer is just around the corner, there are many beautiful events scheduled in the Archdiocese and in our parish. We have also scheduled special parish activities, so mark your calendars now and join us in the celebrations or community gatherings in the Archdiocese and in our parish:

- April 17- Confirmation
- April 24 - Community Social
- May 1 - First Holy Communion
- May 14,15 & 16 - Yard Sale
- May 21 - SJN Nets Basketball Game (Watkins Mill HS)
- June 4 - Mary of Nazareth School Graduation (St. Paul)
- June - Mother of God School Graduation
- June 13 - Parish Picnic
- June 19 - Priest Ordination (Shrine)
- June 26 - Permanent Diaconate Ordination (St Matthew)
- June 27 - Thanksgiving Mass by Deacon Barry Levy
- July 11 - Thanksgiving Mass by Fr. Blake Evans