

March 26-27, 2016

Thoughts from the pastor,

HAPPY EASTER! I pray that it was a great Lenten Season for you and your family. Now you can celebrate and have some chocolate or whatever you gave up. For me there is still an extra day of my Lenten resolution. My promise is to help out with as many confessions in as many places as will fit into my schedule. I know how important the Sacrament of Reconciliation is and I also know that many of our priests do not have the strength or good health that God has blessed me with so I try to offer the extra workload for them. The extra day that is coming that adds to my resolution is Divine Mercy Sunday. The Sunday after Easter is the celebration that Saint Pope John Paul II set as a special day for us as sinners to seek the Lord's mercy. Pope Francis took it a step further this year and declared this a Year of Mercy. But this next Sunday is the main focal point from which the year revolves. For any of you who didn't get to confession during Lent, this is your chance for special grace. So besides hearing confession before each Mass, I will be hearing confessions at Christ the King Church all afternoon next Sunday.

There are still many people within the Catholic Church that have accepted the common Protestant teaching that all you have to do is talk to God and He will forgive you. They believe that you don't need to go to talk to a priest. You have to realize that most of them also believe that the bread and wine at Mass are simply a symbolic presence of Jesus rather than believe that Jesus meant what He said at the Last Supper, "This is my Body." If Jesus didn't change the bread and wine into His Body and Blood then the priest is just a kind of master of ceremonies at the Mass and has no specific authority to accomplish anything different than anyone else. That is why it is no leap of faith for them to decide that the priests can't absolve sins any more than anyone else. For me it is surprising that they still believe in Baptism as a special sacrament. Actually many of them do believe that all that is necessary for salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. When you do that you are automatically saved and you don't have to do anything else.

That concept of faith in Jesus seems to throw out most of what the Jesus says. "Unless you are born again of water and the Spirit you cannot be saved." "Go out to all the nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." After He said, "This is My Body," He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." "What you hold bound on earth will be bound in heaven and what you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." These teachings of Jesus and more are what the Catholic Church has been holding onto for these 2000 years. We figure that if Jesus is the Son of God then He is eternal and His teachings cannot be changed according to the trends of the time.

This is why I spend so much time hearing confessions. I truly believe that Jesus meant for His apostles to hand on the gifts given to them by Jesus to His priests throughout history. I believe that the Sacraments are real and that we risk our chance of eternal life if we disregard them or use them improperly. I believe that amazing priests like St. John Vianney and St. Padre Pio did not waste their time as they heard confessions about twelve hours per day. The question is what do you believe?

I am interested in hearing from you concerning your experience with formed.org. I hope you were able to use some of the materials on that website. Let me know if you liked them, frankbaumert@stelizabethann.org.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank