

Dec. 20-21, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

Since there is no Christmas bulletin, I want to wish you all a very Blessed Christmas. The year has gone so fast. I can't believe that it have been over a year since I was blessed with being made pastor of this wonderful parish. I watch so many of you doing so many wonderful things all around the area, helping those in need in so many ways. Sometimes I feel silly as I think that I am a kind of leader (pastor) for you. You certainly don't need to be instructed on how to be generous with your time, talent and treasure. I just hope that I can be of help in keeping the Sacraments strong in your life. Sometimes people can work so hard on saving the world that they forget to stay with the very instruments of salvation that Christ has given us.

In this vein I want to encourage you, **STRONGLY**, to take this last opportunity to make an adequate preparation for receiving communion on Christ's birthday. The parish Penance Service is Monday evening at 7pm. We will have about eight priests. As usual there will be a short scripture reflection for preparation. After that the priests will be hearing confessions until everyone is finished. For most of you it has been eight months since you have been to this sacrament. For many it has been longer. With all the other Christmas preparations that go on, this one seems to get forgotten.

We buy gifts and decorate homes and yards. We send cards and prepare meals. We do this for each other but we don't do much for Jesus whose birthday we are celebrating. What would He want for His birthday? He told us many times in scripture that He wants, "a humble and contrite heart." We have all heard that many times but don't stop to think about what it means. Someone who is contrite knows that they are a sinner and is sorry for those sins. A person who is humble is not too proud to admit that sinfulness to others. This is such a contrast to the prideful thoughts of those who tell themselves that the things they have done are not that bad. After all, their friends do them also or the church is just ridiculous in insisting that certain behaviors are sinful. And I love the one about how I don't need to go to a priest for forgiveness because I can just talk to God.

The pride in those attitudes is not compatible with a humble and contrite person. Pride makes us our own lord. At that point Christ is no longer the Lord and His wishes are ignored. He is the one that set up the commandments. He is the one that gave us His Body and Blood. He gave us the apostles to carry on His work of salvation while He went before us, ascending to heaven, giving them authority to forgive sins.

In these last eight months we have had so many people missing Mass because of sporting events. So many people have convinced themselves that they are doing their children a great service by skipping Mass for soccer or some other sport. The wishes of the coaches are fulfilled but the wishes of the Lord are ignored. Our teenagers are too busy with sports to take any time to learn about and grow in their faith. Parents have been teaching them by their actions that the Lord's Day is for Mass if nothing else gets in the way. This scares me so much because of Jesus' statement; "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone tied around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." This statement isn't just in one Gospel but was seen as important enough to be in three of them, Mt. 18:6, Mk. 9:42, and Lk. 17:2.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg of our sins. The impurity that we live in would have choked our grandparents but we don't see any problem because it is so pervasive. I would exclaim "OMG" but that is another sin of vanity that we take for granted. Come to confession. If you happen to come in late be sure and let the priest know so you can say your Act of Contrition. The others say it together.

God bless you all,  
Fr. Frank