

## *A Note from Fr. Keith, Our Pastor*

Last week I wrote about Saint Augustine, best known for his autobiographical Confessions, who experienced a profound conversion from sin to grace. He received freedom from his lifelong struggle with promiscuity when ‘Lady Continence’ appeared to him as a vision of many men and women who were chaste by the grace of God. In our modern language, we would describe continence as temperance or abstinence.

Saint Augustine said of his journey of repentance, forgiveness, and freedom, “*In failing to confess, Lord, I would only hide You from myself, not myself from You.*” Divine Mercy, that is, the forgiveness God offers to us, frees us from sin. The normative and objective means of receiving mercy is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, also known as Confession or Penance. The Church desires us to receive mercy, so much so, that the Precepts of the Church obligate us to confess our serious sins at least once a year, typically during the Seasons of Lent or Easter.

Reconciliation has four phases: interior contrition (sorrow) for sin, verbal confession of serious (mortal) sin, absolution from God by the priest, and the completion of penance. In evaluating our need for reconciliation, we should examine our conscience for serious, unconfessed sins. A choice may be mortally sinful when it meets all three criteria: serious or grave action, free choice or consent, and full knowledge.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the most powerful means of grace, forgiveness, and mercy. It is also the most neglected sacrament. People may feel reluctant, ashamed, or embarrassed to confess their sins to God in the presence of a priest. They may even become complacent with temptation and sin. Regardless, God waits to forgive and free us just like any loving parent.

Reconciliation prepares us for receiving the Eucharist by making our hearts and souls a welcoming, hospitable place for Jesus. In this way, reconciliation becomes one of the most important individual contributions to the Eucharistic Revival.

When Fr. David resumed offering the Sacrament of Reconciliation after the pandemic, he set the schedule as 2:30-3:15 PM on Saturdays. However, only a few people avail themselves of the opportunity for mercy. Therefore, in order to encourage more confessions, we will be restoring an additional fifteen minutes to the time. Beginning on Saturday, November 5th, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered in the confessionals from 2:30-3:30 PM on Saturdays. The restoration of this additional time is an invitation to all of us to return to confession.