

February 24, 2019 - **From the Peace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to the Joy of the Eucharist**

One of my greatest joys as a priest has been to hear First Confessions in preparation for First Communions. Fifty years ago, we were encouraged to go to Confession every time we received the Eucharist. At that time, there were no Vigil Masses on Saturdays, and the priests spent long hours in the confessional on Saturday afternoons. While we still have confessions on Saturdays, the lines are no longer what they used to be. It is unfortunate that many practicing Catholics no longer avail themselves regularly of the blessings received through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As we prepare to enter into the 40 days of LENT and focus on the meaning of the Mass/Eucharist (**The Gift of the Mass** series of teachings), I invite every parishioner to go at least once to confession. **I invite everyone, everyone, adults and children, to join us at 7 PM on Thursday, February 28.** We have lined up 12 priests for our pre-Lenten Penance Service. **Come as if it were your first Confession. Come to be fully reconciled with GOD** as we enter together our Lenten Journey. Come and feel the peace of being totally united with God, and anticipate the Joy of receiving the Eucharist on March 1st, 2nd or 3rd as if it were **your first Eucharist!**

We are blessed this weekend with the continuation of the **Sermon on the Plain** (Luke 6:27-38), a most profound teaching by Jesus on how to be a true disciple living a Christian life. Last week, a key message was: "Blessed are the poor... Woe to the rich", reminding us that we are blessed when we depend totally on God and not on ourselves. Today, a key message is: "Love your enemies and do good to them." We all know how difficult it is to love someone who has hurt us deeply. We can only do so when *we stop judging ...when we stop condemning ...when we forgive...when we are merciful, just as our Father is merciful.* We need to ask for the gift of forgiveness. Every time we pray the Our Father at Mass before receiving the Holy Communion, we ask God "to forgive us as we forgive others". Whenever we enter the Confessional, not only are we sorry for our sins, but we also promise God to turn toward Him and change our lives. How can God forgive us if we keep grudges in our hearts and do not forgive those who have hurt us? How can we say to God that we love Him, if we hate our neighbor?

How can our hearts be at peace if they remain filled with anger and resentments against our neighbor? How can we approach the **Altar** at Mass to receive the Holy Body of Christ and His Precious Blood if we have not been earlier to the **Confessional** to have our major/mortal sins forgiven? We should see our spiritual journey as a journey **from the Confessional to the Altar**, a journey from the Forgiveness of sins when leaving the Confessional to the Reception of the Eucharist, a journey from Being at **peace** with **GOD** to Feeling the **joy** of **his** Presence within us at the moment of Communion.

Let us enter our Lenten Journey on Ash Wednesday (March 6) in a state of Grace, having been to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on the previous Thursday (February 28)!

Then during Lent, let's all commit to a sacrifice of time and be renewed spiritually through a more comprehensive understanding of the Mass by attending THE GIFT OF THE MASS (see separate invitation card - sign up at www.olhoc.org/Mass or call the Office at 301-645-7112).

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide the Spiritual Renewal of our Parish, as well as our own personal renewal! May the Holy Spirit, living in Mary, help us answer the Call to Holiness! May the coming soon of a new Archbishop lead our Diocese to a Spiritual Renewal of its 139 parishes.

*One in Christ,
Fr. Alain*