

Reflections

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Confession, Sacrament of Love and Joy

In this time of Advent, we should renew our conversion: change our life, return to God. And the best expression of this attitude is confession. I want to invite you to reflect, for a moment, on the sacrament of confession, reconciliation.

We all know the word of Jesus: *“I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent”* (LK 15, 7). Therefore, confession is the sacrament which produces the greatest joy in heaven because it rejoices more for one sinner who confesses than for 99 just who think they are dispensed from it. But, unfortunately, the same does not happen on earth: few like to go to confession; few rejoice over it.

In the time of Christ, things were totally different. Let us remember how forgiveness would end up in the Gospel, often, in a banquet: Zacchaeus, surprised in a tree, prepares, full of joy, a feast. Matthew, the publican, closes his tax office, invites his colleagues and celebrates with a banquet. The Father of the prodigal son kills the fatted calf to celebrate the return of his son.

Thanks to Jesus, all faults would become blessed faults because of the love with which He knew to forgive them. It was necessary to be God to forgive in that way, so that the fault committed would cause love and happiness.

Only God knows how to make his forgiveness a luminous memory. He is so happy forgiving that the sinners no longer feel upset but happy, understood, useful.

Jesus came to this world only to cure and to save sinners. He dedicated all his time to them, his energy and his love. He himself tells us: *“People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.”* (MK 2, 17)

The same thing happens with a child: while he has not been sick, he ignores how much his mother loves him. But when the child is sick in bed, his mother has the joy of finally being able to spend her love in reserve.

God is also this way. When we are sick, when we know and acknowledge that we are sinners, then God can show us his love, his joy of caring for us and healing us.

When we are in good health, we run so quickly that God cannot reach us. But when we enter the confessional one day, God makes use of – finally – the suitable occasion to explain to us how much He loves us.

Father Kentenich, founder of the Apostolic Schoenstatt Movement, said many times in his last years of life: We all have two titles before God. One is that of the MERCY of God with which we can always count on.

The other is that of personal POVERTY. Because God cannot resist the weakness of his children, if they know it and acknowledge it. He cannot deny himself when He sees man afflicted by his poverty.

This then is confession: the discovery that God loves us and that his love can transform our entire existence. Thus He reveals to us a love, a life, a joy very superior to our sins and that they allow us to do without them.

It is what God tells us when we go to confession: that He loves us, that He forgives us, that He is happy to absolve us. He tells us untiringly that we continue being his very beloved children and that in spite of everything, He continues placing in us his satisfaction and his hope.

Original sin was made in pride: it was to reject God, to want to do without Him. Redemption is fulfilled in humility: we will always have to confess, we will always have to again learn to love the Father in his pardon.

But then, little by little, some of that love begins to penetrate our heart when we are pardoned – some of that affection, some of that joy. And thus we will begin to know how much God loves us and we will begin to experience a new love with which we will be able to correspond to his love. In the measure of being forgiven and loved, we ourselves will learn to love.

Dear brothers and sisters, may this be – in this time of Advent – the sign of our definite conversion, of our inner preparation for Christmas, for the coming of God in our midst.

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