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Saint of the Day:
Saint Pio of Pietrelcina



Padre Pio, as he was known, was born as Francesco Forgione in the small town of Pietrelcina, Italy on May 25, 1887. He was known to be a very pious boy, and even had visions of Jesus, Mary and his guardian angel. He joined the Capuchin Order of Franciscans at age 15, and was ordained a priest in 1910 at the age of 23. Celebration of the Mass was at the center of his life and he would often be lost in contemplation during the prayers of the Mass. He felt called to offer his life as a victim on behalf of poor sinners. He received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ's passion, on Friday, September 20, 1918. Drawn by reports of his holiness, people from all over began to seek out his counsel. One of his many spiritual gifts was the ability to read souls and he would spend many hours each day hearing the confessions of the people who would come to his monastery. He died on September 23, 1968 at the age of eighty-one. Pope John Paul II canonized Padre Pio in 2002.

Why do we need Confession?

Confirmation Prep, Session 5

February 20/February 24, 2018

Opening Discussion...

- What is sin?
- What is mortal sin?
- What does sin do to me?
- Why do we have to confess to a priest?
- Will God always forgive me?
- How does confession help me?

Topic of the Day...

- Jesus Christ gave the Apostles the authority to forgive sins in his name.
- Confession/Reconciliation offers us the chance to be cleansed of any sins we commit after baptism.
- We should confess serious sin at least once a year, usually during Lent.
- It is recommended that we go to confession even more frequently.
- If we are conscious of serious sin, we must go to confession before receiving the Eucharist.
- Making a good confession also prepares us to receive the grace of Confirmation.
- God's love and mercy is impossible to fathom. He is always ready to forgive!

Silent Prayer/Big Questions...

- Lord, what do you want me to know about this sacrament?
- What holds me back from going to confession more often?
- Can I be honest with God and with myself about my sins?
- Do I truly believe that Christ forgives me completely?
- Do I trust in His mercy and love?

Scripture Reflection

Matthew 16:18-20 and John 20:19-23

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation flows directly from the Paschal Mystery. In fact, on the evening of Easter the Lord appeared to the disciples, who were locked in the Upper Room, and after addressing them with the greeting, “Peace be with you!”, he breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (Jn 20:21-23). This passage reveals to us the most profound dynamic contained in this Sacrament.

First, the fact that the forgiveness of our sins is not something we can give ourselves. I cannot say: I forgive my sins. Forgiveness is asked for, is asked of another, and in Confession we ask for forgiveness from Jesus. Forgiveness is not the fruit of our own efforts but rather a gift, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit who fills us with the the wellspring of mercy and of grace that flows unceasingly from the open heart of the Crucified and Risen Christ. Secondly, it reminds us that we can truly be at peace only if we allow ourselves to be reconciled, in the Lord Jesus, with the Father and with the brethren. And we have all felt this in our hearts, when we have gone to confession with a soul weighed down and with a little sadness; and when we receive Jesus’ forgiveness we feel at peace, with that peace of soul which is so beautiful, and which only Jesus can give, only Him....

Dear friends, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation means being enfolded in a warm embrace: it is the embrace of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us recall that beautiful, beautiful parable of the son who left his home with the money of his inheritance. He wasted all the money and then, when he had nothing left, he decided to return home, not as a son but as a servant. His heart was filled with so much guilt and shame. The surprise came when he began to speak, to ask for forgiveness, his father did not let him speak, he embraced him, he kissed him, and he began to make merry. But I am telling you: each time we go to confession, God embraces us. God rejoices! Let us go forward on this road. May God bless you!

(From Pope Francis’s General Audience in St. Peter’s Square, February 19, 2014.)