



*From the Pastor
6th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
February 12, 2023*

EUCCHARISTIC CALL TO CONVERSION.

After a month-long break from my series on the USA Bishops' *National Eucharistic*

Revival document: *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, I continue with part 23. With *Ash Wednesday* a week and a half away, these *pre-Lent days* are the perfect time to reflect on the document's next section which is entitled '*Conversion*.' This 3-year revival's goal is to enable us to better understand and celebrate our *Lord's Real Presence* in the *Eucharist*. For past articles on this *Revival*, the whole document, and a free study guide, go to our parish website - easeton.net.

REPENT! One of the two options for imposing *ashes* echoes what *Jesus* said at the start of His public ministry: *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."* [Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15] That is why we normally begin *holy Mass* with a *Penitential Act* [the *Confiteor* or *Invocations* imploring mercy] or the *Rite of Sprinkling*, which recalls the waters of *Baptism* which washes away all sins. It is also why, right before we receive *Holy Communion*, we humbly confess: *"Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."* None of these prayers, our penitential deeds, or penances are intended to be unhealthy, punitive self-incriminations; we never confess our sinfulness without also acknowledging *God's* compassion, forgiveness, love and above all, His mercy!

Ideally, and by liturgical norm, we do all this under an image of *Christ crucified* to help us remember that *Jesus* already paid the price for our sins; *Jesus* already redeemed us; *Jesus* has reconciled us to *God* and to one another ... however ... we are still a 'work-in-progress.' We have failed to fulfill our *Baptismal Promises*; we do not keep the *Commandments*; we do not live by the *Beatitudes*; we have not become another *Christ*. Nor have we been faithful to our part of the deal we make with *God* each time we pray the *Lord's Prayer*: do we really want *Our Father in heaven* to forgive us ... as we forgive our brothers and sisters on earth? We pray, *"lead us not into temptation"* - but go there ourselves!

CONVERSION: A NEVER-ENDING PROCESS!

Because of human weakness, we can never say we have reached perfection; however, we can never stop seeking our goal, which was bluntly proclaimed by *Jesus*: *"... be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."* [Matthew 5:48] So, with eyes and minds fixed on *His Body* broken for us, and *His Blood* poured out for us, we seek *His forgiveness* for our sins and *His strength* to avoid sinning in the future. This is also why the regular, weekly reception of the great gift of *Eucharist* is so crucial, so essential, so important that we are *OBLIGATED* to receive *Holy Communion* at least once a year - and to *confess our sins* beforehand IF we are guilty of any serious, grave or mortal sins. This is where it gets kind of 'messy.'

TWO TYPES OF SIN. In his first Letter, an *Apostle* makes this interesting distinction: *"All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not deadly."* [1 John 5:17] Based on this, our *Catholic Faith* teaches that there are *two types of sins*; one type we call *'VENIAL'* sins - and the other we call the dreaded *'MORTAL'* sins. While *ALL* sin *damages* our relationship with *God* and/or with one another, all sins do not *rupture* or *break off* our ability to interact with *God* and/or each other. Our *venial* sins, or everyday faults and failings, make life challenging and our interactions more difficult - but they do not destroy our ties or the bonds that unite us. Our *mortal* sins, unless rectified, do irreparable damage and extinguish our relationship with *God* and/or others! That is why there is a particular 'medicine' for each type of sin.

VENIAL SINS. As numerous *Popes* have taught, *Holy Communion* is *NOT* a prize for being sinless or a reward for good people; it is the 'medicine' that helps us avoid committing venial, 'everyday' sins - and even washes them away! So does the *Penitential Act* and *Rite of Sprinkling* at *holy Mass*, our own prayers for forgiveness, and our acts of mercy or charity towards others. For as yet another *Apostle* proclaimed: *"Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins."* [1 Peter 4:8] Next week: what to do if we are guilty of serious, grave or 'mortal' sin.

In His holy Name,

Rev. Thomas J. Serafin, KCHS