

Confession

The Second Chance

I was raised an Irish Franciscan Catholic. My two uncles were Franciscan priests, and my parents were both members of the Third Order of Franciscans. What does this mean?

Franciscans take a vow, amongst many other things, of poverty. I remember when we 'packed up' both my uncles belongings when they made the Great Leap. With both of them, all of their belongings fit into a box the size of two shoe boxes.

They and my parents made quite the impression on me. Even before a neurological disorder took me out of the workforce and a significant income, material things were not high on my list of priorities. Oh, I provided for my family, giving them everything they thought they needed. Paid for ten out of twelve years of college for my three kids. Tried like heck to give my then wife all the things she expected. Today, I rest easy. I did all I could for my family even if some of them think it was not quite enough.

My Godfather, my Mom's cousin and her only relative, a diocesan priest and a dear friend of mine, once told me, "You do your best and the hell with the rest."

To date, I have done my best, but I am far from finished with trying to do better. My guide is my Master, our Master, and His most Holy Spirit.

Yes, like all of us, I struggle to be the best I can be. Yet, it is Hope that drives me. Faith that sustains me. Love is what I attain to be to all I meet.

A couple of weeks back I made it to confession for the first time in two years. I sure had plenty to talk to the priest about. Again, I quote my Godfather when we discussed the concept of 'sin'. He said, "Sin is when you hurt someone else."

That embraces the KISS theory. Keep it simple stupid.

By the Grace of God, I was granted another paradigm shift. After going to confession a tremendous peace came over me realized about a week later. With the recent passing of my only sibling and sister, the grief was unbearable. In packing up her estate and many family heirlooms, I let my anger get the best of me and my behavior was negative. This was not fair to the people around me.

It that week after going to see the priest when I realized there is a tremendous grace to the sacrament of reconciliation. It showered me with the feeling that my spirit, part of His spirit, had been wiped 'clean'. I had the chance to start over yet once again. The feeling was not just 'a feeling'. It was recognizing the truth that He does indeed forgive us our transgressions. It was pointless to carry 'that baggage' any further. He took it away, carrying it Himself, like He does for all of us. He takes our burdens away and puts them on His own shoulders. Though His ultimate act of doing so occurred some two thousand years ago, with the sacrifice of everything He had as one of us, human, He took all the burdens everywhere of anybody, and forgave us forever irrespective of what time and space in which we lived, live and will live.

I believe that in heaven there is no more time. I love C.S. Lewis's quote from one of His many books. "Heaven is all around us. We just can't see it yet."

I know my brothers and sisters who worship Him from a different perspective, as in a religion different from mine, do not see the point of going to another person acting as His direct and personal representative, to receive the constant forgiveness of our sins. I don't know what to tell them. I can only let my example do the talking.

To forgive another is the ultimate act of love while we reside in a place where time is still part of our lives. He forgives us. Can we not do the same?

Clement