

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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THE WORST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

One of our very nice parishioners here at Saint Charles, Mike Golding, recently gave me a funny cartoon which he had clipped out of the newspaper. The cartoon strip is called "Hagar the Horrible" and perhaps some of you have seen it. Hagar is a lovable Viking with his red beard and hat with two horns. Well, in this episode, Hagar is chatting with his parish priest. The priest says, "Confessing is good for you, Brother Hagar...What's the worst thing you've ever done?" Hagar looks at the priest and says: "Confessing to the worst thing I've ever done!"

Maybe Hagar has a point there. It's not easy for anyone of us to go to confession because in that sacrament we kneel before another human being and tell him our faults and failings. Granted the priest represents Christ, but it is difficult for all of us to humble ourselves and admit that we are all weak sinners. That requires some moral courage. A good priest, however, will try to make it easier for the penitents who come to him. A couple of years ago, Pope Francis at an audience told the people that "The confessional is not a torture chamber!" Most priests seek to guide the people and direct them in a gentle and kindly way.

When I think of holy confessors in our Archdiocese of New York, Monsignor Arthur Scanlan comes to mind. He was the pastor of Saint Helena's in the Bronx for many years. He heard so many confessions in that parish that he actually wore out the floor in the confessional box! At a time (the 1940's and 50's) when many people went to the Sacrament of Penance on Saturday afternoons, his lines were the longest.

One time a young lady just could not wait on the line for Monsignor Scanlan, she ran out of time. So she went to another priest and said afterwards, "I felt like Mary Magdalene after that confession! Never again-Monsignor, here I come!" Well, I laughed when I read that story. But no priest worth his salt would make somebody feel really bad who is trying to do better.

In that regard, tomorrow all the churches in the New York area are sponsoring what has come to be known as "Reconciliation Monday." Each parish will have the Sacrament of Penance available for several hours. Here at Saint Charles, confessions will be heard from 3PM to 8PM. As we approach the great feast of the Resurrection of the Lord on Easter Sunday, why not take advantage of the opportunity to "rise up" from our faults and failings and start anew?

Yes, sometimes like Hagar the Horrible, we can feel badly about things we have done in life. We might even think that confessing is the worst thing we could ever do. Yet in reality, in terms of our soul, it is the best thing we could ever do!

The artist Holman Hunt once painted a beautiful portrait which he titled "Christ the Light of the World." The painting depicts Jesus Christ, lantern in hand knocking at a door. When the painting was finished, many people were lavish in their praise, but one man had a criticism-there was no handle on the door in Hunt's picture. But the artist explained it this way "That door represents the human heart. It can only be opened from the inside!" This Holy Week, let us open our hearts to Christ by a fruitful and worthy reception of the sacrament of pardon and peace!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome