

St. Louis Catholic Church

Monday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Daniel 9:4b-10

Psalm 79

Luke 6:36-38

Lent is truly a time for repentance. It is a season to honestly look within ourselves and turn to God who is described by Daniel as awesome and merciful. He is a God always ready to forgive. Yes, He knows the feelings and emotions of regret in our hearts, but it is healthy and wise to take ownership of our sins, confess them and bathe in His unconditional mercy, love and forgiveness.

Daniel knew the history of God's care and he trusted that acknowledging his sins and the sins of his people, that God would pour forth His goodness from covenant love. Pope John Paul II constantly expressed sorrow for the sins of the Church in every age and era of history. Many diocese around the world have expressed sorrow and contrition for the horrible sins of sexual abuse by clergy and Church personnel. Certainly acknowledging that the Church has harmed people by sin is a step in the healing process. It too, of course, is an instrument of grace and healing. The Church like Christ is human and divine. The Church is the Body of Christ--Christ among us--in the world today. Our humanity however is one of sinfulness.

I love the sacrament of Penance and I experience it frequently but certainly not as much as I probably should. I believe that confession, in the sacramental experience, is a beautiful way to say "I am sorry" to God and the community. The priest who receives the power and privilege of Holy Orders is an instrument of both God and the community. Through his office the community and God can say "You are forgiven". How beautiful to hear and how wonderful to know.

As a priest, I know that in 37 years I have at times hurt people. Maybe it was something that I said; maybe it was something that I did or didn't do. I am certain that at times I have caused anguish and hurt to the people I am honored to serve as a priest. I hope that I have, do and will acknowledge that in the Sacrament.

Yet publicly as a priest and as a pastor, I say to you, "I am sorry". Please forgive me. I too say that I am sorry for anything that my brother priests have said or done that has hurt this parish or others within our Diocese. "Please forgive us all." I am sorry.

Over the 2009-2010 school year a study, by an outside Catholic consulting service, was made of our wonderful parish school. As a result some changes were required and decided upon that, I know, caused pain and hurt to people in the parish and school community. The purpose and intent of the study was to serve our children and make our school the very best that could compete with other private schools. It was not personal toward anyone or any group. Decisions and changes that were difficult to make were necessary.

From those decisions some people were hurt. People said things back and forth agreeing or disagreeing with decisions and people were hurt. Sadly, people say things that are only part of

the whole story and others "take it and run". Others presume things to be true that are not true and believe it as "gospel". People pretend to know more than they do and say things that are personally painful and often only a half-truth or a falsehood.

In any case the year was a distraction and disruption for our students, faculty, staff, parents and community. For this, I am truly sorry. I ask forgiveness. Though the intent and actions were for improvement and growth, as pastor I can only say that I take responsibility for anyone who was hurt. Again, to you, I am sorry.

From reports or rumors I felt that at times I was being attacked. Maybe, maybe not, vile things were written or said. I know some disagreed with the need for the study and some disagreed with the results and are still angry. In today's Gospel, Jesus says "forgive and you will be forgiven". I believe that. I forgive all who may have maligned me or the people who helped in this process. As Christ said, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful". I seek and offer mercy. I love the priesthood and the people of St. Louis.

Psalm 51 is powerful in this Lenten Season. A contrite and humbled heart, O God, you will not spurn. In today's Psalm 79 the psalmist cries out to God to remember not the sins of the past. He begs for quick compassion. He seeks God the Savior's help. He pleads for God's deliverance and pardon. We are the sheep of His flock. He asks God to forgive so that we can give thanks forever.

God is awesome and merciful. Owning up to our sins, mistakes and failures is a start to release the chains of guilt, anger, separation, division and alienation.

Let's all use the opportunity of Lent to say that we are sorry and that we seek healing. Let's all say "You are forgiven", to one who hurts us. The Body of Christ is best when all members and parts of the Body are whole, healthy and functioning. St. Louis provides extra hours of the Sacrament of Penance on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:00-6:00 p.m. We priests are always available for confession by appointment and usually very present and available for people who "drop by" the office to go to the Sacrament.

God is awesome. God is merciful.

God Bless,
Msgr. John McArthur