

# Turn Away from Sin and Be Faithful to the Gospel

by Fr. Mark Pavlik ~ February 21, 2010

We continue on our look at the seven sacraments this week. Following last month's article on baptism, next we look at the sacrament of Reconciliation, which is highlighted in the curio cabinet in the ambulatory. Jesus' whole ministry is based on repentance and forgiveness and his ministry in the Gospels begins and ends with it. The first words of Jesus after His baptism were, "Repent and believe in the Gospel" and prior to his ascension, Jesus instructs his followers to preach forgiveness of sins to all nations. Jesus knew that he would not always be with us, so he left his Church the means to carry on his forgiveness.

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 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 them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:19-23)*

If Jesus left the power to forgive sins to his apostles in his name, it follows that power to forgive sins must also be handed on to their successors and continues on in His Church through the ministry of priests.

The question often arises, even among believers, "why do I have to confess my sins to a priest." Well, there are really three basic reasons: The first is that to seek reconciliation through the sacrament of the Church is to seek forgiveness in the way Christ intended it to be taught. Jesus gave the power to forgive sins to the apostles and sent them into the world to do just that, in His name. The second is that in the sacrament of reconciliation, the penitent is assured that their sins are forgiven, since we are following Jesus' mandate. And lastly, and perhaps most practically, in the sacrament, one can receive sound advice on avoiding sins in the future. Confessing your sins and having the ability to speak with someone freely about them can give you insight into how to grow in your faith life.

The sacrament consists of three basic parts: contrition, confession and absolution. Contrition is the sorrow we have for having sinned. Part of being fully contrite is having the desire to turn away from sin and avoid sin in the future. Being sorry is a start, but beyond that, we are called to turn away from sin and back to God. That leads us to confession of sin, in which we tell God we are sorry for what we have done and what we have failed to do and ask His mercy and forgiveness. And lastly, through the ministry of the Church and in the name of the Lord, the priest gives a penance and grants absolution from our sins, freeing us from them.

The season of Lent is a time for all of us to pray for conversion and seek the Lord's forgiveness. If you have not been to confession for a while, now is the time to think about going. If you have forgotten how, there are cards throughout the complex that explain what to do and don't worry, the priest will help you. We are blessed at St. Olaf to have hours of reconciliation times available each and every week of the year. If you have been meaning to go and keep putting it off, consider this your "sign" that compels you to go!