

Saints Peter & Paul
Byzantine Catholic Church
107 South Fourth Street
Minersville, PA 17954

St. Mary's (Dormition of the Mother of God)
Byzantine Catholic Church
131 South Morris Street
Saint Clair, PA 17970

Saints Peter & Paul Rectory: (570) 544-2074

Website: www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com

Email: tvrgjn@outlook.com

Served by: Very Reverend Gregory J. Noga, Pastor

SS. Peter & Paul Cantor: Mr. Paul Konkus St. Mary Cantor: Dr. Peter Yasenchak

CONFESSIONS: Sts. Peter & Paul: Saturday 2:45-3:30 PM

St. Mary's: Saturday 1:00 – 1:30 PM

SICK CALLS: As scheduled, or anytime in case of an emergency. If anyone is homebound or hospitalized, please call the rectory (544-2074)

Bulletins are sponsored by

Mahal-Ritzel Funeral Home

Minersville, PA 544-5111

Mark J. Mahal – Funeral Director

The Greatest Act of Love

During the Second World War, an American prisoner of war held captive in a prison camp was sentenced to railroad repair detail. When the day's work had ended, the tools were counted and one shovel was reported to be missing. The officer in charge of the guards insisted that it had been stolen to attempt escape. Infuriated, the officer denounced the men and demanded that the guilty one step forward to accept his punishment. When no man came forward, the officer's rage had reached the heights of violence and he threatened to kill everyone on the work detail! To show that he meant what he said, he had one the guards cock his rifle and aim it at the first man in line. At this point, one of the prisoners stepped forward and said calmly, "I did it."

The officer ordered the prisoner to be beaten in front of the other prisoners. When they had finished beating him, the prisoner remained standing at attention when the officer gave the order to execute him. The men of the work detail picked up their friend's body and marched back to camp to bury him. When the tools were counted at the guardhouse, it was discovered that no shovel was ever missing.

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "No greater love can there be than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you to do." (John 15:13-14) The Cross of our Lord is a sign of His love for us. Let us venerate with great joy this enduring symbol of God's covenant with us!

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Volume 2022
Christ is among us!

Number 11
He is and will be!

**3rd Sunday of the Great Fast
Veneration of the Holy Cross
Tone 2**

Welcome to the parish communities of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Churches of Minersville and Saint Clair, Pennsylvania. We greet and welcome you to our Church. Our Church is a holy place. Our Church is where we get together in Jesus' Name. It is holy because we come here to worship, to be nourished in faith through Sacred Scripture and preaching, to open our hearts and minds to celebrate the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ and to dedicate ourselves to a life of holiness and service to the Lord and others. The church building itself reflects this faith and calls us to enter into communion with God. We invite you to share our faith in Jesus Christ, to experience our worship and to live a life dedicated to the service of God and one another in Jesus' Name.

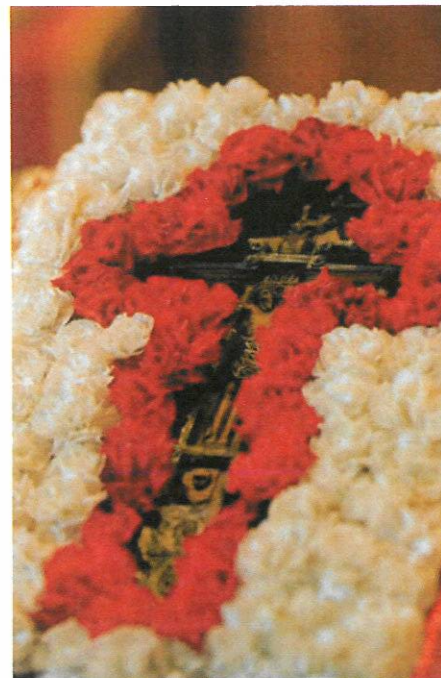
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March 20 – March 26, 2022
All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted

Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p.m. **+John & +Mildred Noga** req. by Tom & Anna Jane Petty
Sunday
8:00 a.m. **+Andrew & +Margaret Gerchak** req. by Estate (at St. Mary)
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners** (at SS. Peter & Paul)
Livestreamed
5:30 p.m. **Lenten Vespers**
Tuesday
8:00 a.m. **1st Lenten Canonical Hour**
Wednesday
6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the pre-Sanctified Gifts**
Thursday
8:00 a.m. **3rd Lenten Canonical Hour**
Vigil of the Annunciation (at SS Peter & Paul)
6:00 p.m. **+Mary Tokarick** req. by Ron & Dolores Kramer
Friday **Annunciation of the Theotokos**
9:00 a.m. **Health & Blessing of the Parishioners** (at St. Mary)
Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p.m. **+Jeanette Lohin** req. by Regina Sinko

Epistle Readers: 3/5 – Laura Mitchell; 3/6 – Gail Burgess; 3/12 a.m. – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/12 p.m. – Marie Wanchick; 3/13 – Jennifer Keer; 3/19 a.m. – Laura Mitchell; 3/19 p.m. – Laura Mitchell; 3/20 – Anna Keer; 3/25 – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/26 – Gail Burgess; 3/27 – Marie Wanchick; 4/2 – Gail Burgess; 4/3 – Dolores Kramer.

Candles in front of the Mother of God; Offered by Anna May Adley for Peace in the World



WHAT SEEMS HARD, LOVE MAKES EASY.

AUGUSTINE: How hard and painful does this appear! The Lord has required that "whoever will come after him must deny himself." But what he commands is neither hard nor painful when he himself helps us in such a way so that the very thing he requires may be accomplished.... For whatever seems hard in what is enjoined, love makes easy. SERMONS ON NEW TESTAMENT LESSONS 46.1.

Did You Know That ...

...if we exercise daily by walking with the Lord, our spiritual journey will lead us to worship every Sunday and holyday?

...if we give the devil a ride, he will always want to drive?

...nothing ruins the truth like stretching it?

...compassion is difficult to give away because it keeps coming back to us?

...he who angers you controls you?

...worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop?

...if we give satan an inch, he'll be a ruler?

...if we are fishers of men, we will attract them and He'll clean them?

...God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called?

...if we read the bible, it will scare the hell out of us?

...what we do in life echoes in eternity?

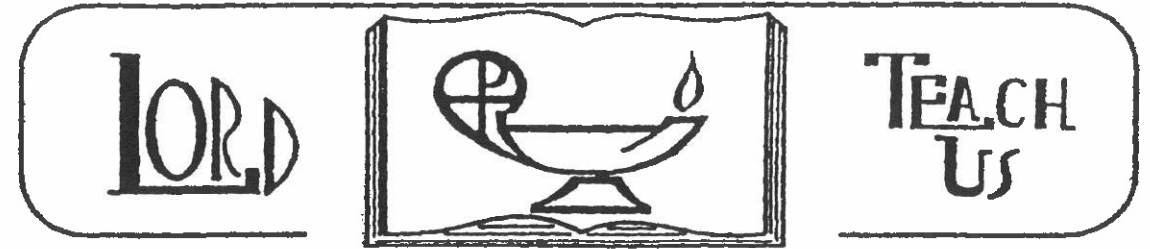
...when we pray for others, the blessing we seek for them also touches us?

...loving Christ is eagerly learning more and more about Him?

...our prayer for others causes them to pray as well?

...a rich prayer life permits us to watch the power of God work in life doing the thing we know He loves?

...forgiving others is something we love to do because God judges us in proportion to our mercy for other souls?



Godly Decisions

That is your sentence. You have decided it yourself 1 Kings 20: 40.

The day will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, at the decision day of the Lord, the great and terrible day Joel 3: 4.

Why do the nations rage and the people utter folly? The kings of the earth rise up and the princes conspire together against the Lord and against his anointed: 'let us break their fetters and cast their bonds from us' Psalms 2: 1, 2.

When I call out to the Lord, he answers me from his holy mountain. When I lie down in sleep, I wake again for the Lord sustains me. I fear not the myriads of people arrayed against me on every side Psalms 3: 5 – 7.

Do me justice, O Lord, because I am just and because of the innocence that is on me. Let the malice of the wicked come to an end, but sustain the just, O searcher of heart and soul O just God Psalms 7: 9, 10.

What is man that you should be mindful of him or the son of man that you should care for him? You have made him a little less than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet...O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth! Psalms 8: 5 – 7, 10.

Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name give glory because of your kindness, because of your truth. Why should the pagans say, 'Where is their God?' Our God is in heaven; whatever he wills, he does Psalms 115: 1 – 3.

Remove from me the way of falsehood, and favor me with your law. The way of truth I have chosen; I have set your ordinances before me. I cling to your decrees; O Lord, let me not be put to shame. I will run the way of your commands when you give me a docile heart Psalms 119: 30 – 32.

Guidance In Making Godly Decisions

Sometimes people spontaneously make decisions and draw conclusions which are vital in their life without really examining the circumstances and implications .

The Word of God in the tradition of the Body of Christ is the believer's guide for making Godly, successful choices in life. If we need to make a decision, it ought to be done based on God's principles. If we must take appropriate action in particular circumstances, they ought to be what God would do.

The believer understands nothing should be done without prayerful consultation with our heavenly Father. Scripture attests, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" Psalms 119: 105. Before making decisions, before drawing conclusions that are important in life, we ought to think about what the Lord teaches and then ask ourselves the following questions:

Would you be able to ask God to bless it?

Would your decision be something that you take before God with a good conscience and ask Him to bless? Or is it something that you know the Lord would not be excited about because it is contrary to what He teaches us? "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich and He adds no sorrow with it" Proverbs 10: 22.

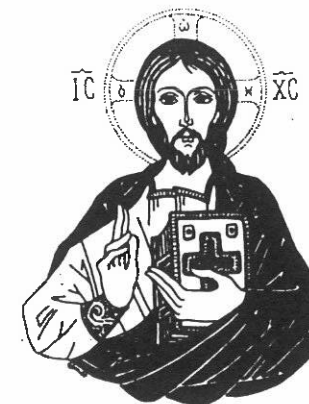
Could you thank Him for it?

Would your decision be something for which you can openly express gratitude and thankfulness to God? Or would it be something which would seem inappropriate to thank Him for? "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" Colossians 3: 17.

Would it be to God's glory?

Would your decision be something that will bring glory to God and honor His Name? Ask yourself how the Lord will be blessed by your plans. "...whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" 1 Corinthians 10: 31.

He is *Revealed*
by many Names...



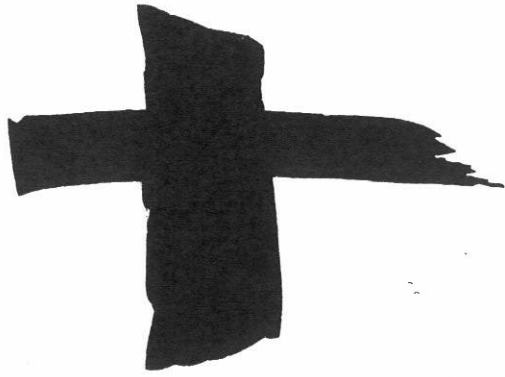
"...and His name shall be called..." Isaiah 9:6.

The Holy Name of our Lord, God and Saviour was revealed by the angelic visitor. Throughout salvation history, He is referred to in a variety of ways, each of which make known more and more of the enduring love of our Heavenly Father for each of us.

King of Justice

His name means, "king of justice; he was also king of salem, that is, "king of peace" Hebrews 7: 2.

The picture is taken from the story of Melchisedech, the strange king to whom Abraham paid tithes in the book of Genesis. He is the righteous one, the king of justice, who exemplifies Christ as King of Kings, the only righteous one, the King of Justice. Because we are not righteous, but always prone to sin, we do not exemplify the justice of God. All of our self-perceived righteousness is like filthy rags, but is the He is the fullness of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. We believe in Him by faith in grace and it is counted to us for righteousness. It is justice that ascribes to us the faith of Christ when we are really sincere and make serious attempts to live the faith taught by the Apostles in the life of our Church. God's justice ascribes to us the righteousness of Christ when our sacramental life is fulfilled on a regular basis and our lifestyle aspires to reach the heavenly theory Christ proclaimed. As we confess our unworthiness, in that very sincere confession, God's justice is done for us in Christ. We rejoice that God's justice is being fulfilled in us who follow faithfully after Him. Then we can rest with peace in our hearts and souls.



Give instruction to
the wise, and they
will become wiser
still; teach the
righteous and they
will gain in learning.

Proverbs 9:9



Have you prayed for the Lord's guidance about it?

The Lord promises to provide leadership and direction in your life. Consult Him in prayer. Remember God will never speak and inspire something into our heart that contradicts His revealed word or the teaching of the Church. "In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path" Proverbs 3: 6. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the decision of the Lord that endures" Proverbs 19: 21.

Have you sought Godly counsel or advice?

Ask the advice of those who live Godly lives and have a track record of experience and wise decision-making. Avoid the counsel of those whose Christian life is questionable or who have the experience of failure in making sound decisions. Speak to your spiritual father and seek his insights. "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" Proverbs 11: 14; "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly" Psalms 1: 1.



***Let The
Children
Come
To Me!***

Would it edify you?

Would your decision or action bring you closer to God or place you farther away? Will it build you up in the Lord, or will it weaken your confidence of the Lord's place and strength in your life? Will you be a more dedicated believer as a result? "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" 1 Corinthians 10: 23.

Would it serve the right master?

Would your decision require you to yield to the demands of someone or something other than Christ? Will it cause you to compromise your submission and obedience to Jesus? Does it show you recognize Christ as first in your life? "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" Matthew 6: 24.

Would His indwelling presence agree with it?

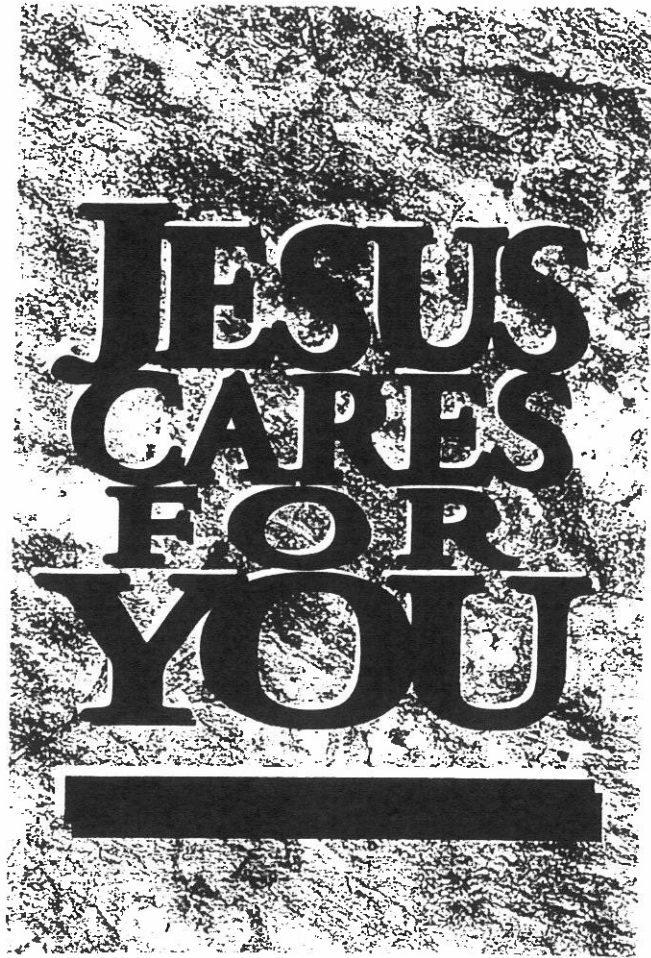
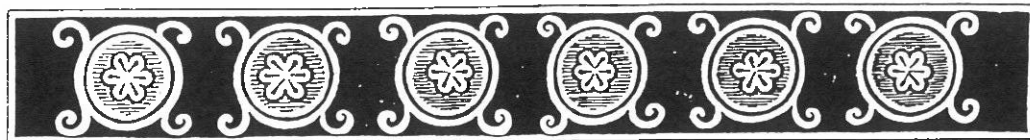
Would your decision bring peace to your inner being, or would it create discomfort and distress? Is your choice directed by the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit, or by appetite of the flesh? Is it consistent with the Christian baptismal vocation? "However, when he, the Spirit of truth has come, he will guide you in all truth..." John 16: 13; "I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" Galatians 5: 16.

Would you want to be doing this when Jesus returns?

Would you want to be caught doing this when the Lord returns for judgment? If Jesus would appear to inspect your decision or action, would you be embarrassed or delighted? Would His presence make you comfortable or insecure? "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" Matthew 24: 44.

Would it promote and increase love?

Would your decision or action express God's love and increase His harmony, or would it reflect retribution, jealousy or injury to your neighbor? "Owe no one anything except to love one another...love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" Romans 13: 8, 10.



Jesus comes to you: *Open your heart.*

Jesus cares for you: *Give Him your life.*

Jesus forgives you: *Confess your sins.*

Jesus challenges you: *Live His life.*

Jesus loves you: *Believe and pray.*

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance; grant victory to Your Church over her enemies, and protect Your people with Your Cross Troparion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

No longer does the flaming sword guard the gates of Eden, for on them one finds the most glorious seal, the tree of the Cross. By it, the sorrow of death and the victory of the Abyss have been conquered, for You, O my Saviour, stood up and called out to those in the Abyss: "Enter again into paradise" Kontakion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

We bow to Your Cross, O Lord, and we praise Your holy Resurrection Hymn instead of "Holy God", Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

Rejoice, O live-giving Cross of the Lord, Paradise of the Church and new Tree of life, who bring us the joy of unending glory. Through you, the hosts of demons are driven back; in you, the angels in heaven rejoice; and for you, the assemblies of believers are now keeping the feast. O invincible weapon and impenetrable stronghold, pride of bishops and scepter of kings, grant that we may now contemplate the Passion of Christ, and His holy Resurrection Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

Seeing You, the Creator of the universe, hanging naked on the Cross, all creation was shaken with fear; the sun hid its rays and the rocks split asunder; the earth trembled and the veil of the temple was torn in two; the dead arose from their tombs, and the powers on high were struck with awe and said: O, what wonder! Behold, the Judge undergoes judgment and freely endures His passion for the salvation and restoration of the world Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

Come, let us all sing a new song to celebrate the defeat of hell; for coming from the tomb, Christ has broken the power of death and saved the world. Come, let us all draw in faith, not from the fountain of corruption, but from the source of light; let us venerate the Cross of Christ in Whom we are glorified. As we venerate the Cross, which Moses formerly prefigured with his hands, we put the spiritual Amalek to flight. O Christ, our Master, and we ourselves are saved. Matins Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.

Would it exclude God and be simply carnal and worldly?

Would your decision be merely a worldly indulgence, based on carnal lusts and appetites? Is there discernible spiritual value in it? "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" 1 John 2: 15.

Would it be a stumbling block to others?

How would your decision affect the spiritual lives of fellow believers in Christ? Even if you do not feel it is wrong, could it offend or harm sensitive faith of those who do not share your convictions? Will it enrich or spoil the commitment of others? "...beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak" 1 Corinthians 8: 9.

Would it be a weight or a hindrance?

Would your decision result in dragging down your Christian life or influence you toward disobedience? Would your spiritual life be adversely affected? "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" Hebrews 12: 1.

Would it please God or man?

Whom do you hope to please with your decision? Will it be pleasing in the sight of God as a fulfillment of His will? Or will it appease self and other limited men? "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not to men" Colossians 3; 23.

How would the devil respond?

Would your decision or actions be considered a victory or a defeat by the forces of evil? Would hell celebrate your choice as a fulfillment of satan's desires, or would the enemy be angry and disturbed? "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brothers in the world" 1 Peter 5: 8, 9.

What would the consequences be?

What kind of long term ramifications would you have to face because of your decision? Remember, God will forgive sin and poor judgment at repentance, but you may have to live with results of your decision for the rest of your life. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" Galatians 6: 7.

Making A Good Confession

Believers come to appreciate the “good” confession as one that is, first, the result of a believer’s earnest desire simply to be forgiven. This may seem to be stating the obvious; however, it is an attitude that is very often lost among the reasons we go to confession. Unless we are deliberately mindful of this purpose each time we confess, we run the risk of leaving those blessed few minutes in the confessional without fully benefiting from them spiritually.

The purpose of and need for us in confession is the part that often seems like its ritual conclusion: the absolution and forgiveness of our sins. Christ came precisely to this earth to pronounce “Your sins are forgiven you” to the repentant soul. In each confession, we should experience the great blessing of these simple words.

The first quality of a good confession is that we come with no other expectation than to hear the words of Christ entrusted to the Church. If, for example we come expecting revelations about the nature of our sinfulness as in a therapy session, we very likely will be deluded. And if we are waiting for spirit-rending counsel from the priest, the devil will certainly assure we leave disappointed, if not with the sacramental Mystery itself, then at least with the man around whose neck the priestly stole hangs.

One thing alone is necessary: the desire, the urgent need, to be forgiven. Nevertheless, this deceptively simple purpose implies a whole battery of other elements that bears on the quality of our confession. Among these is the idea that to ask forgiveness is to imply that we are asking it of *someone*, that someone has been offended. Confession therefore, is not simply about admitting to the breaking of a number of divine rules, and St. Paul clearly teaches that this idea should be foreign to believers. Rather, confession is primarily an act undertaken to reconcile a relationship with the One we have offended. It is a personal spiritual matter, not a legal-judicial one.

This understanding takes us still further into the Mystery of a good confession because it obviously presupposes that we indeed already have a relationship with God. Holy Scripture, especially Isaiah 6, clearly teaches that genuine repentance comes after one has had a glimpse, however simple or limited, of the Divine, the Truth, the Good One. This vision of our God and communion with Him is cultivated in prayer, contemplation, fasting, study, and the practice of the virtues. But there is no other door to repentance than the good confession. What seem like alternatives are probably the result of vain intellectualization, or even worse, a form of self-abusive condemnation. The latter is paradoxically yet fundamentally, an act of pride.

If we have an intimate relationship with our God, it is impossible to maintain it without being honest in it, without allowing the probing and pure light of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. He,

we are told, will search our hearts and reveal our sins to us. We need only accept His direction and respond by repenting of the sins He uncovers in us. In this regard we need to examine the place of the many and varied “examinations of conscience” that are available to believers in prayer books.

As long as we lack the closeness to Christ which makes the feeling of repentance our habitual condition, we must prepare for confession by examination of conscience according to the commandments, by certain prayers, by texts from Scripture, etc. From this we may conclude two things. First, we should not let our imperfect faith prevent us from coming to confession. Rather, we should fan the flames of repentance by meditating on whatever checklists of sins are available to us, and then simply submit to the grace of the sacramental Mystery.

The second thing we must accept is that this form of preparation cannot ultimately satisfy us. We need to strive to become familiar with the clear inner voice of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and souls. This is particularly necessary because simply bringing lists of sins to confession may in fact become an obstacle to real progress in the struggle with our sinfulness. We may begin to substitute admission of sins for true repentance. Only the Holy Spirit can lead us to the point where our confession needs to begin, and only He can gently guide us through and away from each of our sins, that they may be cast off.

Perhaps the great grace and sign of a good confession is the wonderful relief that accompanies it. This unburdening occurs only when our hearts are broken to the point that, bluntly, we would be willing to shout our sins from the rooftops. For most of us this is a definite challenge to pride; so we become adept at finding deliberate and unconscious ways to preserve our dignity and avoid humiliation. So perhaps we foolishly visit other priests and parishes where we are not known. We veil our sins in vague language, or we surround our confession with explanations and excuses by which we attempt to minimize the damage to our pride. In so doing, we prevent ourselves from ever knowing the great blessing and relief of a real confession because we have introduced subtle lies and pride into a moment which demands total self-revelation and truthfulness.

When we come to the point where, in order to bring peace to our hearts, we are willing to hold nothing back in preserving our dignity, we will have made the good confession. Ultimately, when we do not care who knows about our secrets, our dark, dirty, embarrassing selves, we will be free of the hold of sin in our lives.

Finally, let us not be discouraged if we fall again into the same sins, even after a confession that arose from a genuinely broken heart. The last virtue that characterizes the good confession is a combination of hope and patience; enough of each to continue without despair to confess the same sins with the humble belief that they are forgiven each time and that, eventually, they will be taken away from us by a merciful and loving God. After all, this is why Christ came among us, to save us from our sins. He will not fail in His purpose unless we obstruct His attempt. Surely we cannot go wrong if we trust in His promise.