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Companions on the Journey

December 18,2022

Dear Friends,

Beginning tomorrow there will be seven different opportunities to receive the Lord's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation here at Saint Anthony's. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday there will be confessions from 4:00 until 5:00 (or so, until all who desire to receive the sacrament have done so), and then again from 6:30 to 7:30 (or until finished). On Christmas Eve, from 1:00 until 2:30. Last year I heard eleven hours of confessions during a similar time. Please come to be forgiven. However long it has been. Do not think that you don't know how to go, or how long it has been. None of that is really important. Just say to the priest, "Father it has been awhile since my last confession." The priest will take it from there. This is such a great sacrament. I go to confession every month. I love to hear the words of absolution and know that whatever I have done or failed to do has been washed from me by the loving embrace of the Lord. His death has won me a share in his victory over death, and over sin. He came to wash us clean. It begins in baptism but it continues in our prayer and in the Mass and in this sacrament too.

There are moments of real forgiveness when we pray an Act of Contrition or when we call to mind our sins in sorrow at the beginning of the Eucharist. There is real sorrow and forgiveness when in our heart of hearts we ask the Lord to forgive us. In the Sacrament we believe that the encounter with the forgiveness of Christ is sure and certain. But in these other instances there is also a real forgiveness as well. But sometimes we need the assurance. We just want to know. Just want the assurance that what we have done wrong has been removed by the grace of God.

Here is one of my convictions about the judgment that we are each to undergo. Any and every sin that we have confessed and received forgiveness has no power over us anymore because the Lord has already defanged the poison of that sin. The judgment has occurred and the Lord's mercy has prevailed. So none of those sins matter. If we choose to withhold our sins or if we want to think that what we have done shouldn't be a sin or is so insignificant that it doesn't matter then I ask you to rethink what you believe. God's mercy is precisely for us in our sinfulness. Why not embrace God's understanding of what constitutes sin and accept that rather than try to replace it with what we think. How far is that likely to get us?

God is a merciful God. At the same time, God asks our honesty, our humility, and our sincerity. He isn't looking for us to redefine things. Let him forgive. Let him set you free. After all it is Christmas and this forgiveness—this is his very best gift to us.

Peace,
Msgr. McHenry