



Dear Family and Friends,

I was celebrating Reconciliation with children recently and without breaking the seal of confession I can share that many times children come into confess without putting much effort into examining their conscience. Why is that? I think it is because none of us like to look at our sinfulness. I guess the children are one step ahead in that at least they get the chance to experience the grace of the sacrament. That is important because if there is no acknowledgement of sin there is little chance of any kind of spiritual growth. It is sin that holds us back being the Christians we would want to be.

It is unfortunate that remorse has become a dirty word in our society. It is like the old John Wayne movie, "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon." Wayne's character (an army officer) repeats the same line over and over. When someone asks forgiveness of him he says, "Don't apologize mister, it is a sign of weakness." In our society that seems to be the sentiment. No one wants to ever have to say their sorry.

Remorse must be felt if a person is ever going to be put in touch with their vices. If we feel remorse it is a sign that we have a conscience. Having a conscience is a good thing. It is a gift. It shows we care about how we treat others and how we feel about disappointing God. If we feel we are perfect, we make a God of ourselves.

There are some people who are riddled with shame. This is a bad thing. Shame has to do with being unable to let go of the things that we might have done wrong. Shame has to do with defining ourselves as an evil person. Because some people are scrupulous others feel like that feeling any kind of remorse is a bad thing.

The way to wash away remorse, guilt and shame is that we become ever more aware of how merciful God is. Psalm 103:6 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us." When I read all the verses of the Bible that have to do with God's mercy I am overwhelmed. But if I never feel remorse those verses do not stir or assuage my guilt.

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