

Fr. Gerard's column 3/26/23

If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you.

How often we use the words, “dead” or “death” to describe something other than physical mortality. We use it to describe non-functioning inanimate objects, (my phone died) and we also use it to describe a physical or mental exhaustion, (I’m dead tired.) Sometimes we use it to describe the status of a relationship. A married couple who had struggled with a myriad of issues once told me, “Our marriage is terminal.” Other times I have heard someone express that another person is, “dead to me.” Where does our resurrection faith come into play when we reflect on dead or dying relationships?

The reality is that some relationships, like our physical bodies, do in fact die. Often this occurs because we let the dying process get too far or we accepted as fact that there is no hope for reconciliation. How can we allow our hope in the resurrection, our belief that death has no power over us, transform a relationship that was once believed to be dead?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one way to start down the path to new life. No matter what the other has done to us, we are never free of sin ourselves, even if we have no guilt in the brokenness of a relationship. Experiencing God’s mercy, that is knowing that we are loved and forgiven by our heavenly Father through Christ, gives us the capacity to forgive others. That is what Saint Paul is referring to in today’s second reading when he speaks of the spirit of the one who raised Christ from the dead, dwelling within us. Forgiveness is never a validation of wrongdoing it is simply that capacity that sets us free from that sorrow having any power over us. Our relationships will die if there is not a divine capacity to forgive, dwelling within us.

Even married relationships or friendships that no longer exist as they once did, do not have to end in death. There can be new life. Former spouses that are no longer married, siblings that once were inseparable and friendships that were bonds greater than that of a family member, can still live on in a new way, that is not deadly. As we journey through these final weeks of Lent, may we find hope in our resurrection faith, that what was thought to be dead, may live in Christ Jesus.

DAY OF RECONCILIATION - A week from this Monday, April 3rd is the annual tri-diocesan day for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On that day from 2-4 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. all Catholic parishes in the Archdiocese of New York and the dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre will have priests available for confession. This day has become a significant and popular opportunity for the faithful to receive the gift of God’s mercy. Please consider making the celebration of this sacrament of healing a part of your preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Peace, 

An Examination of Conscience

I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.

Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people?

Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.

Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on Holy Days of Obligation?

Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord’s Day, and the relaxation of mind and body?

Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

Honor your father and your mother.

Do I show my parents due respect?

Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible?

Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?

You shall not kill.

Have I harmed another through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

You shall not commit adultery.

Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?

You shall not steal.

Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s spouse.

Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?