22nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

 Confession is one aspect of a spiritual life in Christ and should be seen as a sort of spiritual check-up with one’s spiritual father.

  Confession is not a duty nor requirement to be fulfilled. Repentance and confession have an important place in the development of our Christian life. The sacrament of Holy Confession may be seen as a gift from God for the reception of forgiveness. With practice, Holy Confession may begin to appear as an opportunity for personal spiritual growth.

  By keeping ourselves in front of God, we find it easier to remain free from the bonds of sin. In the words of St. Thallassios, “As wax melts before fire, so does an impure thought before the fear of God.”

So it is with sin in our lives. Without confession, each additional sin appears to stain us very little and we become numb to the difference between right and wrong. But when we receive the gift of a clean slate through confession of our sins, we find our sins more uncomfortable, because they are so very clear to us in our current state of cleanliness.

  It is important to remember that If we are to be forgiven our sins by God, He requires of us that we also forgive one another. For may of us, this is the most difficult aspect of repentance and confession. Yet we say it each time we pray the Lord’s prayer, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

 Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until we have someone to forgive.”

  Our repentance will not be complete if, when we make confession, we do not resolve not to return to the same repented sins. But, one might ask, how is this possible? How can I promise to myself and to my father-confessor that I will not repeat this sin? For through experience, we all know that after some time, we will always return to the same sins; as we observe ourselves year after year, we see no improvement, “we jump up, and fall right back down.” It would be horrible if it were so.

But fortunately that’s not the case. It doesn’t happen that when someone makes confession with a willing heart and partakes of the Holy Gifts, some good changes do not occur in the soul. But the problem is, first and foremost, that we are not our own judges; a man cannot properly judge himself, whether he has become better or not, since he would be both the judge and the one standing trial. Every sin must be judged by God. None can be overlooked .

The true nature of Confession is deeply therapeutic. Confession is not a tribunal but is a hospital for the sick. The priest is not a judge that analyzes the facts and then gives you a sentence; he is rather a doctor that tries to diagnose the state of your soul and helps you improve its spiritual shape. If there is disease he applies treatment‚ if there is health he assists you reach the next stage in your heavenly ascent.

If we expect help from the Church on our spiritual life‚ we cannot contend ourselves with general advice: be good‚ don’t kill‚ don’t steal etc.  In Church we are part of a shared support system that can apply personalized training to every one of us. Confession is at the foundation of this institution‚ because through Confession we can receive honest feedback about our real spiritual stage and recommendations for development.  Missing on this important sacrament is to reject a big part of our spiritual experience and slap on the helping hand extended to us all the way from heaven.