**CONFESSION**

What’s the one subject that we - as followers of Christ - talk about a lot, but practice very little?  CONFESSION.

And what’s the one habit that will directly impact your spiritual growth and maturity more than any other?  Yes, same one… CONFESSION.

And most importantly, what's the one practice that will DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE to your ability to feel God's love and mercy and  forgiveness... and at the same time DESTROY the feelings of guilt and shame and isolation? CONFESSION again!

Often we confuse the two.  We think of confession as some type of counseling session.  And because we don’t have major issues and aren’t in need of counseling, we presume that we don’t need to confess.  WRONG!

Counseling is an important component in the development of one’s spiritual life.  It may be needed on and off at various times – especially during times of transition or tribulation.  However, counseling is NOT the same as confession.

Counseling is important for many; confession is NECESSARY FOR ALL.

Confession is a "sacrament", which comes from the Greek word “*mysterion*” meaning ‘*mystery’*.  I like the term ‘mystery’ because it gives a greater emphasis on what is taking place – something much greater than what the naked eye can see.

For example, in the Mystery of the Eucharist, the eye sees bread and wine; but the reality is the Divine Body and the Precious Blood of Christ.  In the Mystery of Baptism, the eye sees a human going into a pool of water; but the reality is that a new man is being born in Christ, given a new nature.  In the Mystery of Matrimony, the eye sees two people dressed nicely and smiling for the cameras; but the reality is that those two people have become one flesh.

In the same way, the Mystery of Confession is more than meets the eye.  The eye sees a man sitting with a priest, struggling to reveal his sins.  But the reality is that the man is not sitting before a priest, but before the throne of the Most High God.  He is not just recounting his sins, he is washing his soul.  And he is not listening to advice from a mere man, but rather from the Immortal Spirit of God.

**How long and how often?**

Which is better: to brush your teeth for 2 minutes a day, twice a day, every day of the year?  Or do nothing all year and then go to the dentist for a root canal at the end of the year?  The same as brushing, the Confession, the participations in Liturgies, prayers everything needs constancy and regularity

It is interesting to see how Christ, the True Physician, helps us to reach a state of repentance.  We notice that He did not simply tell us to “stop sinning”.  Jesus instead guided us to see the problem of ourselves, through the hands of the priest, in the mystery of confession.

Confession is not just a listing of the ways we have failed as Christians.  It isn’t an obligation that we have to fulfill a few times a year because Fr. Volodymyr says we do!  I remember hearing a story one time in seminary, about a man who went to the priest and started to look at the examination of conscience, and said:  *“Father, I’m a pretty good person…I don’t really do anything wrong...I’m just here because you said I had to be”*

The priest smiled and said:  *“Your obedience is admirable.  But if you haven’t done anything wrong in your life…perhaps we should have an iconographer add your image next to the other Saints of the Church.  But for now, let’s start with wiping away your pride...and we can go from there”*

Don’t be that person!  Confession isn’t an obligation that we fulfill!  It is **an incredible.** Grace that we receive, to help build our spiritual life.  Conversations with our spiritual fathers are a way for us to dig deeper into our conscience…to lay our entire life out onto the table…and to uproot the cause of WHY we continue to fall away.

Living a God-centered Christian life is a struggle. Everyone falls.  That man in the story would have never had his picture on the wall with the saints, because if we asked the men and women with halos, they would all be the first to tell us that they were the worst of sinners!

We all have our off days, and it is so easy for us to let those off days become the routine…to allow that broken wheel to continue to spin, causing us to fall even farther away from the love of God. This is why regular participation in the mystery of confession is so vital to us as Christians!  It is a re-set button…a release from the routine of sin, and the beginning of the path back to the Life-Giving God, to leave behind all of the things that pull us away from the joy of the Liturgy, so that we can re-orient our lives, towards union and communion with our Lord, who never ceases to do wonders for the world.