

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

3rd Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 20, 2022

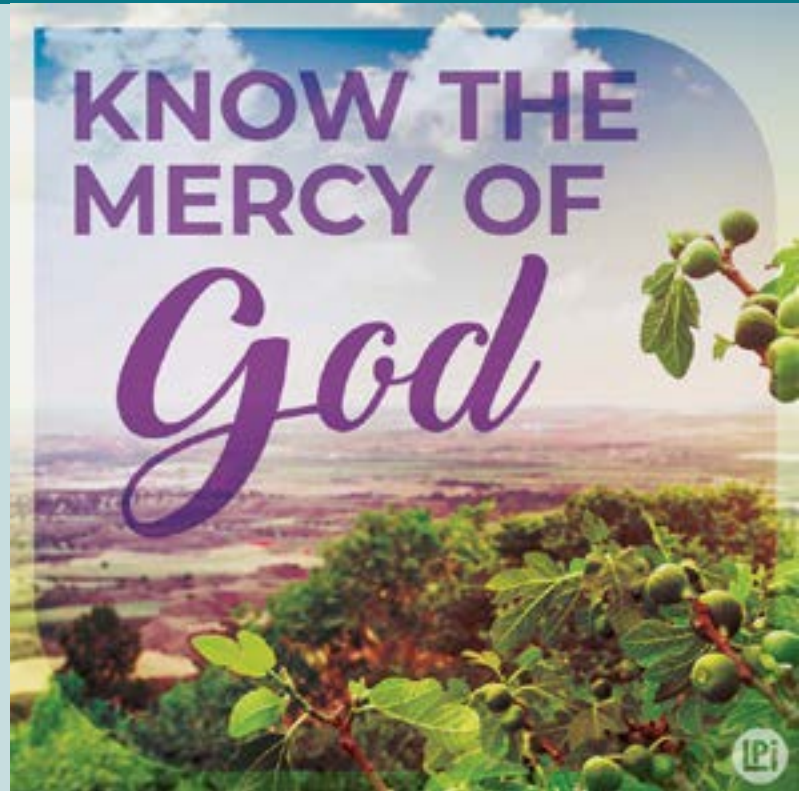
Confession and the Fig Tree

Written by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13:1-9



Most of the sins I confess when I approach God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation are sins I committed on the way to approaching Him in the Eucharist.

Listen, I'm not proud of this, and I'm not making excuses. But it's really hard getting a family of five out of their beds and into a church pew on a Sunday morning. Everyone has to be wearing clothes (usually clothes they don't particularly enjoy). The long hair of little girls needs to be brushed and arranged (cue screaming). The little ones have to be fed and clutching whatever stuffed animal they have decided is The Chosen One this week, the magical talisman they assure me will help them be quiet and not dissolve into a shrieking meltdown just as Father elevates the Host (and — spoiler alert! — they usually have the shrieking meltdown anyway).

I say this in jest, partially — of course my sins are far more numerous in quantity, and often more serious in kind, than the orders I bark and the rebukes I hand down from the passenger seat of our van on a Sunday morning. But it's only partially in jest, because here's the cold, hard truth: I am consistently at my worst in that seat, in that moment, stressed out and tired and resentful. I'm laser-focused on the failures of the people I love and preoccupied with the weight of the burden I carry.

I've said some pretty terrible things to my husband in those moments, and I've snapped so hard at my kids that I've wondered if God even wants me to come to church that day. So, I take it all to Confession and I lay it out, and God embraces me and tells me we'll try again next time.

But in recent months I've been plagued by an aversion to Confession — a restless self-consciousness that kept me away for longer than it should have. A voice was whispering: *Why go in that little room and kneel down and say all the same things, over and over and over again, when you know you're not strong enough to stop doing the very things you keep confessing? When you know you're headed right back to the front seat of the van?*

I shared this with the priest the last time I went to Confession. I literally told him: "I feel so lame coming in here and saying the same things over and over again. I mean the Act of Contrition when I say it, but then I go back out there and do it all again. I hate it." What I left unsaid, but what I know he understood, was my real question: *If this sacrament is working, why do I keep needing it?*

God bless him for not rolling his eyes (maybe he did — I was behind the screen, after all). But he patiently explained to me that the sacrament is working exactly as it was designed, again and again and again. Because it brings me, kneeling, before the mercy of God — again and again and again. It is reminding me that I am not better than these temptations. I am not better than these failures. I am not better than these weaknesses.

I am the fruitless fig tree, slated for the ax. I exhaust the soil of the orchard. But still there is a Gardener who has not given up, who looks at me and says: "Wait — I'm not done with that one yet."

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

PRAYER

Jesus, mystically present in the Eucharist,
My God, I firmly resolve
with the help of Thy grace
to sin no more
and to avoid the near occasion of sin.

— *From the Act of Contrition*