

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Holy Mother Church gives us a third precept to help advance our spiritual life: "To Confess our sins to a priest at least once a year." The **additional Lent confession times** at OLR are Thursdays from 11:00am – 12:00pm, and Sundays from 3:30 – 4:30pm in Upper Church.

One of the main reasons why so few Catholics go to confession is that they really are not aware of the sin in their lives. Our society encourages us to make excuses. "I just made a mistake." or "I'm only human after all." or "I didn't do anything really bad like killing someone!" Many Catholics have forgotten how to make a good confession and have forgotten how to examine their conscience fully.

Worst of all is the fact that the most insidious sin is the sin we are unaware of, or the sin we have explained away. The third precept--that we should go to confession at least once a year--is a rule that should not only get us to confession, but get us to make a good examination of conscience first. The way to make a good examination of conscience is to be very objective and thorough.

Remember, the rule to go to confession once a year is not there to be a burden to you, but a benefit. In confession your burdens are lifted, you receive Christ's healing and forgiveness and you are restored once again to your original baptismal purity.

The fourth precept of the Church gives us another minimum requirement: "To receive Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter Season."

In the Early Church, and even up to recent times many of the faithful would only receive communion once a year. They 'heard Mass' each week, but to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was considered so sacred and wonderful that they considered themselves too unworthy. Only after a good and full confession would they feel ready to receive the Lord.

Happily, times have changed and the Church now encourages frequent reception of the sacrament. However, there is a down side to frequent reception of the Eucharist. We see many people come to receive the Lord, but not many people coming to confession. Can it really be that there are so few people in our churches who are guilty of mortal sin? I think not, therefore I think many people are receiving the Lord unworthily.

I think frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ is important, but I also believe that whenever we receive the Lord, we should be doing so having cleared our consciences with a good confession--making sure that we are not living in a state of sin and so receiving the Lord unworthily.

Finally, the precept states that if we receive the Lord only once a year it should be during the Easter Season. This is a reminder that we are an Easter people and that the revolutionary fact of Christ's resurrection is what gives meaning to our lives for it is

through his passion and resurrection that we are redeemed. Receiving the Lord at Easter is also a reminder that every Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection, and that we should be there to worship him and, if possible, receive Christ the Lord every week.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker