

Bp. Mariann reminded us of a song in her address this morning.  
It's by Don Henley – of Eagles fame, for those of you in my generation.  
It goes:

I've been tryin' to get down  
To the heart of the matter  
But my will gets weak  
And my thoughts seem to scatter  
But I think it's about forgiveness  
Forgiveness  
Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

Forgiveness is the heart of Holy Week. In fact, forgiveness is the heart of Christianity.

Forgiveness comes out of love. Forgiveness comes from a position of strength.

There are several aspects of forgiveness: us forgiving others and us accepting others' forgiveness. Of those two, the latter is usually most difficult. And, then there is the matter of us forgiving ourselves. Ah...the most difficult one of all.

The true source of strength in forgiveness is in the weakness of a crucified God. We cannot do it alone. We need divine assistance to forgive others, to forgive ourselves, and to accept forgiveness wherever it may originate. It takes courage. It takes not just a little hubris. It takes Love.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is given to us by God out of love. It is not a means of squeezing the guilt out of our conscience. Rather, it is the means of our experiencing how much God loves us. Despite the disciples' failings and misunderstandings, Jesus loved them. Despite Peter's denials, Jesus loved him. Despite our sins willingly chosen and those unwillingly spun into our daily lives, Jesus loves us.

Of course, it's never easy to admit our when we haven't measured up. Our culture really doesn't want us to fail. Failure has been turned into a negative when it should be seen as a way to learn, a way to become better human beings.

We all fail. We all fall short of our ideals. We all fall short of God's desires for us. But, unlike Don Henley's song, God never ever stops loving us. Therefore we are able to come to God, acknowledge our imperfections, and receive forgiveness and restoration for our spirits.

Tonight, we are privileged to enter into conversation with God as to those things that disturb our spirit. God is listening – with love. We will make our confessions in silence. Should any of you discern the need for a private rite, please see me after the service and we can talk further.

In the long silence in which you will be invited, let it all go: resentments, blaming, keeping the past in order to have power over the present. Let go of fear, the need for revenge, the need to destroy both others and yourself. Let go of the egotistical need of being right and accept God's need for you to be faithful.

Once you've let all of that go, turn to the cross and see the love that brings you forgiveness. Feel the love that wraps its arms around you and welcomes you home again, and again, and again.

Remember:

God has been your strength since before you were born. In Christ, you have been delivered from the clutches of the evildoer and oppressor. The Spirit sustains you as children of light.

There are no secrets hid from God. And, still – always-you are loved. That is the heart of the matter.