

**Day 152 – Wednesday, August 19 - Reconciliation** *continued*

**Preparing to Receive the Sacrament**

When I (the author of the article, not Fr. Jim) prepare to receive the sacrament, I now ask myself, “*How am I holier this time than the last time I celebrated the sacrament?*” By asking this simple question, I become attentive as to how I live my life as one loved and forgiven by God. So instead of just being burdened by sin (which is the natural effect of sin), I am also and more attuned to the God who is only too willing to continually set me free from such burden (the evil one may tempt us to forget this bigger reality).

Now that I hear confessions, I find that penitents respond positively when I challenge them to also ask the same question to themselves. Frequently, I hear a tone of joy as I hear them say, “*Father, I am getting better!*” or “*Father, I feel holier than the last time I was here!*” In this sense, the sacrament is truly a celebration because God sets us free from sin and eternal death. In our journey to God, making the sacrament of reconciliation an integral part of our life is truly a stepping-stone to holiness and perfection. Through this wonderful sacrament of divine love and mercy, “*God called us out of darkness into His wonderful light*” (1 Peter 2:9).

**DON'T CHANGE**

I was a neurotic for years. Anxious, depressed, selfish. And everyone kept telling me to change.

And I resented them, and agreed with them, and wanted to change, but simply couldn't, no matter how I tried.

What hurt the most was that, like the others, my closest friend kept urging me to change. So I felt powerless and trapped.

One day he said “Don't change. I love you as you are. ”

Those words were music to my ears: “Don't change. Don't change. Don't change... I love you as you are. ”

I relaxed. I came alive. And, suddenly, I changed!

Now I know that I couldn't really change till I found someone to love me whether I changed or not.

Is this how you love me, God?

*In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley*

Sincerely,  
Fr. Jim Kaptein