

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

For some mistaken reason or information, many seem to be of the impression that the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation in confession) is out of date. It is one of the seven sacraments and is still the center of the mission of Jesus who came to call all to Reform and Follow the Gospel.

As we come to the close of Lent I would like to share a story as an example of the Lenten journey's climax.

*A man had been suffering excruciating pain for some time; finally, he could not take it any longer and made an appointment to see his doctor. After completing the examination and tests, the doctor said to the patient: "Do you really want a cure?"*

*The poor suffering man was amazed that the doctor would ask such a question. "If I didn't want a cure, why would I make an appointment, or even bother to see you?"*

*The wise doctor replied, "Actually, most people who come to see me really don't want a cure."*

*"Then why do they come?"*

*"They come for relief," the doctor explained. "Cures can be too demanding, too painful. What most people really want is to feel better."*

My friends, the doctor is right: Truth be told, we often aren't as interested in being healed as we are simply in feeling better. As long as we can justify in our own minds why things are not as they should be if we can rationalize our failure or refusal to do what is right, if we can convince ourselves and other that everything is really fine...we're *fine*.

Remember the famous line of Jesus in the Gospel when he was in Jerusalem in the Temple at the pool called Bethesda. "Do you want to be well?" The question that Jesus asked the paralyzed man seems kind of ridiculous. But you see, my friends, to be "well," to be "healed," is more than simply feeling better. To be healed means, first, recognizing our need for restoration and mending and wanting it badly enough to "stand up" and stop feeling sorry for ourselves, "to pick up our mat" and put away the rationalization and excuses, to "walk" the difficult path that brings healing to our hearts and spirits—the path of forgiveness, compassion, humility, mercy and justice. Our Lenten "healing" is not a time for relief or a momentary respite: our Lenten journey from ashes to the cross to the tomb, is a time of being made whole and complete in God's grace in the sacrament of Penance in confession.

God Bless,

*Fr. Villanova*

