

Confession: Is There An App for That?
Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

There are lots of people today who think that religion is old-fashioned, out-of-date and irrelevant. I agree if you take the myths, stories and metaphors from thousands of years ago as literally true. But, if we understand that those stories were recorded in a time of a different world-view and were told first around campfires for many years and then were eventually recorded on scrolls of parchment and then have been passed forward to us with much editing, then you will know that taking the Bible seriously requires lots of study, prayer and learning.

How many of you believe in Santa Claus? I hope all of us do believe—in the spirit of generosity that Santa represents even though we know in our own lives who carries out Santa' spirit.

A minister provides pastoral care for people, which includes pastoral counseling. I know that every person, male or female, who comes to me for counseling is just the same and myself—an imperfect person, a human being. In my experience the largest proportion of people who come for help are seeking to “let go” of something from their past.

It may be the pain of shattered relationship. It may be dealing with grief that has not been completed, but hangs on and on. It may be something they did or did not do in their past that wakes them up in the middle of the night. It might be resentment that has been eating them up inside.

I'm sure that you are aware that the key to letting go of troublesome matters of our pasts is FORGIVENESS. Until we are able to find forgiveness for ourselves, or for those who have hurt us, we will continually be seeking our own wholeness. But forgiveness is a difficult process that takes time, courage and faith.

The first step of forgiveness is CONFESSON—admitting to ourselves and to another person, or to Creator God, what really happened. How we hurt, or how we were hurt. That's difficult to admit, to articulate and to deal with the accompanying feelings associated with the event.

For Roman Catholics there is a process for confession—meeting with a priest either in the confessional box where through a screen the identity of the person and the priest is more or less concealed. A number of Catholics have told me that they tend to know which priest is hearing confessions at what hours, and often will plan their confession to meet with the priest they believe to be “easiest” on those who confess.

We Protestants usually do our confession in worship liturgies, where the community voices about how we have fallen short of God's glory. It's easier to confess in community, than one-to-one.

Keeping up with the times, I guess, The Catholic Church recently announced a new app for your iPad or iPhone. You download the app. Register and log in with a secure password that choose your status (Single, married, laity or priest, and you choose your preferred Act of Contrition—which is the type of prayer of confession you'll be making.

The next screen gives you a customized, "Examination of Conscience" based on the 10 Commandments. The technological innovation of an app is being used by a Church to examine the 10 Commandments and God's claim upon our lives.

Lots of none religious folks have told me, "I'm not part of a Church, but I try to live my life according to the 10 Commandments." If I want to be just a little bit difficult I ask them which 3 of the 10 Commandments they have the most difficulty obeying?

Often there is an embarrassed silence when they only can respond, "Well, I haven't killed anybody" but have identifying any other of the 10. And there are lots of other people who find the 10 Commandments out-of-date, "because all they tell you is what you can't do." "You can't have sex, you can't smoke or drink, can dance, you can't have fun." I urge you to download the commandments and find out what they really do say.

I believe the commandments are given NOT as "You shall NOT" but rather as a guiding light for how to live a full and complete life.

The first four commandments are all about put Creator God #! In our own lives and how we are to worship God, how we are to respect God's name—his last name is NOT "dammit." The first commandments urge us to make time every week to have a Sabbath—Just as God did when creation was finished. "And on the seventh day, God observed what was created, and God said, "It is very good." And then God rested.

Does anyone here today, think we don't need to be reminded to find Sabbath time for relaxation and renewal?

The other six commandments are all about how to live in community, recognizing that when we fail to treat others as also created in the image of God, we are falling short of the glory intended of us and expected from us.

Confession may have a technological app, which may be better than nothing, but I believe that confessing to a human being, hearing forgiveness spoken and blessing given has much more power and a pre-programmed message.

We are each imperfect, and we are each human beings created in the image of a God who is loving, nurturing, and forgiving. Use this season of fall to let go of the old leaves that have dried up and no longer are life giving.

Find away to find forgiveness so that you can let go of past mistakes, choices, and short-comings. Today, as you share in the life-renewing sacramental meal, know that you are one of God's beloved.

I believe the Creator is calling us to honor our wholeness and offers the Divine Love to help that happen. The gift is free, but not cheap.