

**November 19, 2010**

***“Echoes of the Heart”***

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

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**Getting right with ourselves.** Like many of you, perhaps, I’m a big fan of the Dalai Lama. In a conversation on the inborn *hunger for happiness* that drives us all, he observed:

*The more I see of the world, the clearer it becomes that no matter what our situation—rich or poor, educated or not, whatever our race, gender, or religion, we all want to be happy. It’s in our nature.*

He goes on to talk about how everything we do, within the context of our life-circumstances, is a response to this great concern: *How am I to be happy?*

Interestingly enough, in one of my favorite *Psalms*, Psalm 32, happiness comes from being forgiven. Imagine that? Happiness comes from being forgiven, understood and accepted.

None of this necessarily comes easily. Much of the time, it takes effort on our part. Sometimes, in order to *get right* with ourselves, we have to do some probing self-analysis and discover what’s out of sync in our spirit. We’ve all known the internal uneasiness or anxiety that comes when some part of us is unsettled and out of balance.

Sometimes it’s because of something we said that was overstated, or a comment we made that was misunderstood or misconstrued—like when we had a bad moment or even an extended series of bad moments.

**Dealing with guilt.** The point is, there are times when *we’re not right*. Sometimes, this uneasiness within transmutes into guilt; and unresolved guilt, over time, wears away at us. It burdens us and weights us down to the point where, left unattended, it descends into depression and brings us down.

The *Psalmist* understands this in a profound sense:

*While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night (God’s) hand was heavy upon me; and my strength was dried up as if by the heat of summer.*

Isn’t this an insightful confession of the spirit? When we bottle things up inside us, when we don’t express them, don’t deal with them, don’t *get the poison out*, so to speak, our body/spirit *wastes away*. It literally makes us ill.

For the *Psalmist*, resolution comes in a confession of sin, in a *turning* back to God, to

the holy in our midst.

*Then I acknowledged by sin to God, no longer hiding it ...and God forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Heave stuff, to be sure, with the *sin* word and all. But *sin* isn't so much a negative word as it is descriptive of our human situation. *Sin* simply means a tilting towards excess in pride, greed and *looking out for number one*.

**The gift of a confessional heart.** One of the interesting things about us human beings is that, admit it or not, most of us know the difference between right and wrong. We know; the problem is, we don't want to admit we know. We prefer to project an innocence that covers up our bias.

We know when we're stretching the truth on whether or not we can afford home ownership. We know when we take a person's comments and out of context and bend the truth to better suit our objectives.

However, to be healthy and free as individuals, at some point truth has to have its moment in the sun. We can't *get right* with ourselves when we're forever living at cross purposes with our best self. The *gift of a confessional heart* is the starting point for helping us *get right* with ourselves.

To find happiness, we have to be honest with ourselves and, at times, bold in our self-assessment. Admitting when we are wrong and off base is a strength, not a weakness. The key is how we respond in the days ahead.

In this sense, the gift of a confessional heart is a blessing for any of us. Not only does it free us from the burden of yesterday, it opens us to the larger promises of tomorrow.