

Dear Parishioners,

As I was preparing for my homily for this weekend I ran across a quote from Preparing the Word which has given me lots of fuel for thought.

*"Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to a single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever."*¹

Hannah Arendt.

How true this statement is. I have felt the impact of my sins so powerfully at times I have, so to speak, reduced my entire life to their consequences thereby finding it impossible to see the goodness, indeed the dignity, of my own life.

This blindness can be so dark, so all consuming, we become frozen, paralyzed by our guilt. However, Christ tells us, "All that is hidden shall be revealed." In that revelation we will find our way. If we choose to keep our guilt a secret we can get by for a long time, but sooner or later the past comes back to haunt us and we are forced to move in the direction we tried so hard to avoid; we have to set things right.

One of the great blessings about seeking forgiveness is that we ultimately are released from the consequences of our sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is wonderful because it offers the grace we need to be unshackled from the oppressive chains of guilt. We cannot release ourselves, no matter how hard we might try. In order to set things right with God, our families, neighbors, church, and with ourselves we need the grace of absolution; it is the key which unlocks those chains and enables us to live in peace.

Of course, this release is not always immediate, nor does it allow us to live as we had before. We have to atone for our sins; we must also amend our lives. It is not always enough to tell God how sorry we are in the hopes that with God's grace we will be freed from the fires of hell we fear so much. Our sins always touch other people and so we have to seek their forgiveness. We

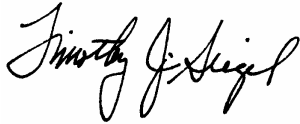
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also have to forgive ourselves. But there is more; we have to amend our lives. This means moving beyond the apologies to actually changing our lives so that we will not commit the same old sins again.

Our capacity for doing good, for loving, is boundless when we choose to be freed from the consequences of our sins. Mercy, forgiveness, compassion, these are some of the ways our wounds are healed thus enabling us to be merciful, forgiving and compassionate toward others.

There are two types of people in this world of sin and forgiveness, love and hate, war and peace. One type of person is a *wounded healer* who seeks forgiveness and strives to live in peace with the world. The other type of person is *an unhealed wound* still shackled, still blind, still reduced to the consequences of sin. This person is a victim of sins consequences forever.

In joyful hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Timothy J. Seigel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Fr. Tim Seigel,
Pastor