

A Recession Antidote

By Randy Hain

I went to reconciliation a few days ago with a lot on my mind. I have been weighted down for the last few months with work stress, concerns about money and a myriad of other issues big and small. As I went through my examination of conscience, I couldn't get past the sins listed on the Confession Guide under the First Commandment. I specifically focused on two of the questions: *Have I failed to trust God? Have I failed to put God first in my life?*

As I reviewed my litany of sins since my last confession, I realized that the majority resulted from my actions and negligence while under stress and pressure. I also realize that I had forgotten over the past few months a very important lesson: give up my burdens to the Lord every day in prayer. My focus had pridefully been on my solutions to my problems instead of entrusting everything to Him. **Matthew 11:28-29**, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.”*

Also, I had fallen into the subtle trap of doing exactly what I wanted instead of placing God and His will first in my life. Consider the meaning of Saint Augustine's famous motto: *“Love God and (then) do your will.”* Author Peter Kreeft explains it this way, *“In other words, if you truly love God and his will, then doing what you will, will, in fact, be doing what God wills.”* How often do we ask God to validate our feelings and actions instead of placing Him first in our lives?

Ask yourself how many people you personally know who have lost their jobs or are going through financial hardship. I know so many good people who have been negatively impacted by the economy in the past year and I continue to pray for them and their families. Maybe you have been personally impacted and find it hard to be optimistic in the face of the daily negative media blitz on the worsening economy. The stress and pressure is enormous and you find yourself, as I recently did, forgetting the one source of strength who is always ready to help us-Jesus Christ.

I remember very well what my life was like before converting to the Church in 2006. I internalized everything, dealt with all my problems myself and never sought out the Lord's help in Prayer-I didn't know how. Today, I look at my faith journey in the Catholic Church and am incredibly grateful for all the gifts and resources we Catholics have at our disposal. I would like to share a personal list of “recession antidotes” that are helping me and my family through these challenging times. I hope they are helpful to you, a friend or a struggling loved one.

1. ***Pray, pray, pray.*** There is no better antidote to our stress and anxiety than asking for God's help in prayer. Unburdening ourselves every day of the thoughts which weigh us down brings an enormous sense of relief and is what our Lord asked us to do in **Matthew 11**. Just as important is thanking Him for the blessings in our lives and asking for guidance and wisdom on the journey ahead.

2. ***Frequent reconciliation.*** OK, we are praying and asking for God's help with our burdens, but we are still saddled with the sins we commit daily. Go see your priest and partake of this wonderful gift we Catholics enjoy, but may not utilize enough-the sacrament of reconciliation. My recent confession gave me an enormous sense of relief and lifted my spirit. The examination of conscience was illuminating and reminded me of where I had fallen off track. I actually look forward to my next confession and will go much more frequently in the future.
3. ***Christ comes first.*** Easy to say, not easy to do. We are overwhelmed at times with the problems of this world, but we mistakenly think we can solve them alone. Love Him, thank Him, praise Him, unburden ourselves to Him, surrender to Him and above all put Him first. Our problems will appear very small through the filter of Christ's love for us.
4. ***Talk to our Mother.*** Go to the Blessed Mother in prayer and ask for her holy intercession. I encourage you to pray a daily Rosary-Mary will hear us and pray for us if we ask her.
5. ***Go to Adoration/Reflect on the Mysteries of the Eucharist.*** Spend some time listening, praying and reflecting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. I have been going to Eucharistic Adoration for over 2 years and it is the best part of my week. Pray that you will be worthy to receive the Eucharist during Communion. The **Catechism #1327** says, "In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: *Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.*"
6. ***Help others, let others help you.*** Lending a helping hand to others in time of need is our duty as Christians. Regardless of our personal circumstances, we can and should give back our time, talent and if circumstances permit, our treasure. It will lift up your soul to help others in need, even if you are also in need of help. Which leads me to a challenging idea: also allow others to help you. It can be challenging for our egos to let others help us, but why should we deny them that privilege and grace-filled act? Being open to people praying for us, getting networking assistance to find a new job or just asking our friends and fellow parishioners for suggestions or counsel will dramatically increase the likelihood that the Lord will work through these good people to touch your life in a positive way.

There are so many things we can do to help ourselves (and each other) get through these tough times-I could not begin to list them all here. The point of this reflection is to simply share the recent revelation that all of my efforts to fix my own problems and carry my own burdens over the last few months were in vain. We must put Christ first, trust in Him and follow His lead. Surrendering control is difficult, but as St. Ignatius of Loyola said: "*Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them accordingly.*"

Let's remember to pray for each other and everyone affected by this economy. Thank you and God bless you.

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