

Fr. Perozich comments –

Certain clergy today are pushing personal transformation into the image of Jesus through their designed socialist and dictatorial edicts on worship styles, immigration, virus/vax, race, climate, equity, sexual permissiveness.

I do not think they will be successful in healing human weakness and connecting human beings with the Holy Trinity.

The Pillars of Piety, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are taught by Jesus to allow Him to heal us of our iniquities, sins.

Fr. Derek Sakowski brings to light how SHAME blocks this communion IF the Christian does not bring it before Jesus for healing.

- *shame – ... “an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”*
- *Shame secretly torments every one of us as fallen human beings. It affects every single relationship we have – with God, with each other, and with ourselves.*
- *Authentic communion heals shame. We all ache for that – and are perhaps terrified of it at the same time.*
- *I see shame as the shadow side of communion. It warns us when connectedness is under threat. It shows up in our bodies as a neurological warning signal, swiftly and intensely seizing our attention and launching us into a survival response.*
- *We all know the experience of “overreacting” in the present moment. What is really going on? Our body is feeling the familiarity of rejection, abandonment, failure, or humiliation.*
- *we freeze up and just take it; or we go numb and stop feeling anything.*
- ***Unhealed shame fuels contempt.*** *I have **always** found it to be the case that those of us who are hard on others are experiencing (or intensely avoiding) our own shame. Our self-contempt shifts into a contempt of others and an urge to make them pay.*

- *feeling intense shame for months. I remember one Sunday simply not wanting to go to Mass anywhere. I couldn't bear being seen.*
- ***A good friend is someone who sees right through you – and loves you anyway.***
- *He was seeing **all** of me, telling the full truth, and (for some reason I simply couldn't fathom) he was still eager to have a relationship with me. It was so dumbfounding and so healing. [Jesus does this for us—rp]*
- *He saw right through them, but he saw them in their wholeness. He invited them into communion: follow me.*
- ***Jesus declares us worthy and invites us to be secure in his Father's love. [the Sacrament of Penance does this]***
- *Do we let our whole self be seen? When and how and by whom? Do others feel totally safe and secure in our presence, knowing they don't have to hustle or hide? Why or why not? [I still have some work to do in this area —rp]*



Communion Heals Shame

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FR. DEREK SAKOWSKI



Shame secretly torments every one of us as fallen human beings. It affects every single relationship we have – with God, with each other, and with ourselves.

Recall the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. **The devil seduces by inviting a mistrust of God’s goodness and generosity.** Once Adam and Eve choose to be their own gods, they experience the reality of that rupture. They run and hide from God (as though he were a petty tyrant eager to punish them). They sew fig leaves and begin protecting themselves against each other. Their good human passions become unruly – in themselves and their descendants.

One need not read far into Genesis to experience the downward spiral of depravity. We begin to use, manipulate, envy, hate, and kill. Shame is at the root of it all.

Brené Brown is a fellow Catholic who often speaks or writes about shame. She describes it as “an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”

I see shame as the shadow side of communion. It warns us when connectedness is under threat. It shows up in our bodies as a neurological warning signal, swiftly and intensely seizing our attention and launching us into a survival response.

We all know the experience of “overreacting” in the present moment. What is really going on? Our body is feeling the familiarity of rejection, abandonment, failure, or humiliation. And our limbic brain is catapulting us into a survival response. Without even thinking, our defenses spring into action: fawn, fight, flight, freeze, or (as a last resort) shutting down. Depending on the situation (and on the skills we’ve learned over the years), we placate or smooth things over; we power up and begin shaming the other person; we change the subject or leave the room (or grab our phone and plunge into our screen); we freeze up and just take it; or we go numb and stop feeling anything.

In intense situations of threat, these are actually brilliant responses that give us a better chance of surviving! But in everyday life they really rupture our relationships.

Unhealed shame fuels contempt. I have *always* found it to be the case that those of us who are hard on others are experiencing (or intensely avoiding) our own shame. Our self-contempt shifts into a contempt of others and an urge to make them pay. Just spend a minute or two on social media and I think you’ll see what I’m talking about!!

In my own life, God has provided many moments of melting my shame. One was totally life-changing. I was a 23-year-old in the seminary in Washington, D.C. Some very challenging circumstances – including a severe lapse of judgment on my part – left me **feeling intense shame for months. I remember one Sunday simply not wanting to go to Mass anywhere. I couldn't bear being seen.** That put me in an intense bind.

Not going to Sunday Mass was simply unthinkable for me, but that inner conviction was in a mighty tug-of-war with my desperate urge to hide and isolate. Even attending anonymously across the street to the National Shrine felt unbearable. I slinked upstairs to a little chapel to pray, and there found two resident scholars, Romanian priests. They were offering Mass in their own language, and I had a way out of my dilemma – for now.

It was in this season that my friend Peter “saw” me and drew near to me. Peter was a 37-year-old who was about to be ordained a priest. I desperately miss him – he died in his sleep only four months into priesthood! He and I had many talks, in which – without naming it at the time – he helped me feel seen, soothed, safe, and secure (to borrow language from Curt Thompson). I didn't want to be seen. I told him as much. I'll never forget his words: ***A good friend is someone who sees right through you – and loves you anyway.*** And that was the thing – Peter wasn't seeing the perfectionist version of me, nor the always-succeeding version of me. He was seeing **all** of me, telling the full truth, and (for some reason I simply couldn't fathom) he was still eager to have a relationship with me. It was so dumbfounding and so healing.

He provided for me what Jesus so often provided in the Gospel – with the apostle Peter, with the woman caught in adultery, with Zaccheus, with Matthew, or with the woman at the well. **He saw right through them, but he saw them**

in their wholeness. He invited them into communion: follow me.

The Greek word is *koinonia* – which means not only “fellowship” (as many Protestant Bibles translate it) but a true sharing or participation in the communion of the Trinity and of the whole Body of Christ. **Because Jesus has reconciled us to the Father and to each other through his blood shed on the Cross, we now have a place to belong. In a sense, our shame is speaking truth – we can never become “worthy” by our own best efforts – and we don’t have to! Jesus declares us worthy and invites us to be secure in his Father’s love. THEN we can begin growing and bearing fruit. Apart from him we can do nothing.**

But it’s never just “me and Jesus.” He always places us in *koinonia* with each other. He desires his Church to be a community in which we all have ways of experiencing what I did way back when with my friend Peter. We all need fellow Christians who see right through us and love us anyway!

I invite each of us to recognize the ways that we sabotage or block real community from happening in our families and in our churches: Do we let our whole self be seen? When and how and by whom? Do others feel totally safe and secure in our presence, knowing they don’t have to hustle or hide? Why or why not?

Authentic communion heals shame. We all ache for that – and are perhaps terrified of it at the same time.

Will we allow the Holy Spirit to create it in our midst?