

Armata Bianca

The White Army

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JESUS, the Lamb of God.

Who is the Lamb of God? **Jesus is the Lamb of God.** When Jesus is called the Lamb of God, we are referring to Him as the perfect and ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Passover Feast, one of the main Jewish holidays, is a remembrance of God's deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Moses relays to his people God's instructions to sacrifice a lamb without blemish and to apply the lamb's blood to the doorposts and lintels of their homes as a sign to the Angel of Death to "pass over" those homes without killing anyone inside. This sacrifice of the lamb to save the people from death was part of a covenant between God and the Israelites. When we look at the

Paschal Mystery of Jesus (Pasch means Lamb), we see a perfect parallel to the Passover. Jesus was the Lamb to be sacrificed. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we are marked (like the doorposts) to be saved from death (to sin).

The holiest, saddest and most important day of the year is coming up – Good Friday. Jesus became the victim, the Pascal Lamb and He became death for us so that death would be defeated. This is why we follow Him. Remember at **Mass after the Priest consecrates the Host and he raises up Jesus and says, "This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are we who are called to His supper."** Then we say, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

Dr. Sheila played a children's song called, "Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is Your Name". After the song we were expecting a guest Priest, Father Michael Sisco to come and talk to the children about the Priesthood and the role of the Blessed Mother.

While waiting for Father Michael, Dr. Sheila talked about Confession. It is mandatory for every Catholic to go to Confession at least once a year and it must be during Lent in order to receive Jesus on Easter Sunday. When our Blessed Mother appeared to the children of Fatima, and even now when she is appearing in Medjugorje, she tells us to go to Confession at least once a month and as often as you need to clean your soul. Pope John Paul II used to go to Confession every day. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, went to Confession every time she had the opportunity which was almost every day. You may say, well Dr. Sheila, they were Saints! How would a Saint be able to go to Confession every day? Well, even Saints were sinners. We are all sinners, only God and Our Lady are sinless. Priests are sinners



The Angel, is holding the Lamb of God.

too. Do we have to go to Confession for venial sins? Every time we go to Mass, from the beginning of the Mass is the Penitential Rite where the Priest says, "Let us pause for a moment and ask for pardon for our sins." These sins he is talking about are our venial sins. But if a venial sin is becoming a bad habit, where you are doing it over and over again, you might need to take it more seriously and go to Confession. Remember, a sin is a sin. **Venial sins take us a little bit away from God, but mortal sins take us completely away from God.** When you commit a mortal sin, your soul becomes black because you have cut yourself off from Jesus. God knows we are not perfect and that we are going to make some mistakes. Our Lady of Medjugorje says to take any sin to the confessional. Sin cuts you off from God's grace and sin is when you say "no" to God. It's your intention that matters. Mother Mary tells us that a sin of gossip and a sin of spreading false rumor about somebody can keep you out of Heaven and land you in Hell. If you purposely commit a sin even when you know that it is wrong, but you do it anyway and say to God that you don't care, then that is a mortal sin. Do you think that it is worse to kill someone with a knife or to kill someone with your tongue? The sin of calumny is when you spread a horrible rumor that isn't true about someone because you hate them. If you ruin their reputation and you make everyone else in the neighborhood hate them, and you turn everyone else against them then that is a very serious sin. God can forgive those serious sins. Every time you go into the confessional, your sins are wiped clean like a white piece of paper.

So, Dr. Sheila handed out an "Examination of Conscience for Children". She told the children that they have to be ready to go to Confession. They have to really be "sorry" for the sins they will confess. You have to have "contrition" which means that you feel very sorry for what you did.

The 10 Commandments are a useful tool for young people to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They're old enough to know the drill: Examine your conscience, make a mental list of sins, pick the "nice" priest and go to confession. But how many young people take time to make a thorough examination of their consciences before the sacrament of reconciliation? Just like cleaning their rooms and doing their homework, they're going to need reminders.

Here are some questions children should ask themselves before participating in reconciliation:

Examination of Conscience for Children

Did I pay attention at Mass? Have I fooled around in Church?

Did I say my prayers every day? Did I purposely not say my morning or night prayers?

Did I say mean things to my mom and dad?

Did I always say "Thank You" to people?

Am I hard to get along with during school? At Grandma's? At home?

Did I do what mom and dad told me to do? My teacher?

Did I do my chores?

Did I hurt other people's feelings by calling them bad names?

Did I refuse to play with someone for no good reason?

Have I started fights with my brothers and sisters at home?

Did I think I was better than others?

Have I blamed other people for things I do?

Did I get other people into trouble?

Did I say my prayers without paying attention to them?

Did I use God's name without respect or in anger?

Did I miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days on purpose?

Did I treat holy things without respect?

Do I hit people when I get mad? Did I get angry? Have I forgiven people? Or am I holding a grudge?

Did I make fun of others? Did I make a bad confession by purposely leaving out a mortal sin?

Was I lazy about my schoolwork? Did I fail to do my homework?

Was I mean to animals?

Did I give bad example? Did I not go to confession at least once a year?

Did I steal anything? Explain what it was. Did I purposely break something?

Did I tell any lies? How many times did I lie to my parents? My teachers? My friends?

Have I cheated in school or been unfair in games?

Did I want what others have? Was I jealous?

Did I eat meat on Friday on purpose?

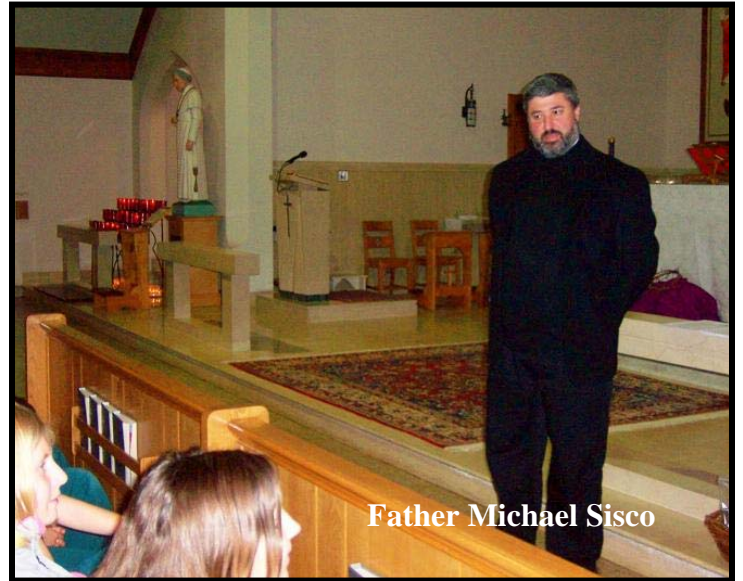


The Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.



All the children of Armata Bianca prayer group greeted Father Michael Sisco. God Bless You Father Michael Sisco! He told us that his e-mail had been hacked and so we all prayed an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be for Father Sisco's situation. Next Father Sisco talked about becoming a priest. He didn't always want to be a priest. He first thought about it when he was a kid and when he became a teenager he pushed that idea away. He had plans to get a college degree and then a master's degree and join an organization called "Care". Where he would become a missionary and teach around the world. He was going to join them for a few years and use the money he would make from doing that job to pay off his student loans and then buy a sail boat and sail around the world. Then he would write books about all this stuff and later come home and settle down around the age of 30 and retire. This was what he was going to do with his life. When he was in college working towards his graduate degree he started to get this nagging feeling that God was calling him to something else. He kept pushing it out of his mind because he didn't want to hear it. He would go so far as when he was praying his prayers, he would always end his prayers by saying, "...and God, I will do anything you want me to do except be a priest because I'm not going to do that so don't ask me!" So, after some time he had a girlfriend for about a year and a half and her name was Helen. They got along together and they really liked each other, but they had one breaking point. He was Catholic and she was Greek Orthodox, which are very similar. But she didn't want to do what was Catholic and he didn't want to do what was Greek Orthodox. At his last semester of graduate studies, he got into a bad car accident. He was up in Vermont and doesn't remember the accident to this day. The cars hit each other head on. Usually he puts his seat belt on but this day he did not. He tried, but the seatbelt just wouldn't work. So he drove without putting it on. This was one of those rare accidents were if he had the seatbelt on, he would have been killed. He was thrown out of the passenger door of the car. When the police came on the scene, the driver's side of the car had been completely demolished. They thought that he was the passenger of the car and that the driver had been killed. So he had to go to the hospital and recover from his accident. For six months he was in the hospital with his arm in a cast and sling, fractured skull and broken ribs. He had double vision and couldn't read. His equilibrium was off which made it hard to walk. While he was trying to recover he wasn't able to do anything except pray and think. The first day when he finally got out of the hospital, his parents drove him back to Westerly. It was on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. He couldn't sleep lying down, he had to sleep sitting up because of the cast contraption for his arm. His arm was broken in a few areas and there was a bone that wasn't attached to anything. His arm had to be completely immobilized in a certain position. If he layed down that bone would fall out of position and wouldn't heal right. He had no other choice but to sleep sitting up. So now he is sitting in bed, he can't do anything and he is not tired. He decided to pray the Rosary. As he was praying the Joyful mysteries, he started to notice a faint scent of flowers in the room. **When you pray the Rosary and you smell the scent of flowers, that is a sign of the Blessed Mother and she is praying with you!** He thought that he was imaging things. When he was done with the Joyful mysteries, he realized that he had nothing else to do and started the Sorrowful mysteries. While he was praying the Sorrowful mysteries, this scent of flowers was getting stronger, and stronger and stronger. When his dad passed by his room and smelled the scent of flowers, his dad came into the room to see what he was doing. His dad was thinking he was dumb enough in the state that he was in to try and burn incense. His dad asked him what he was doing in there? He told his dad that he was praying the Rosary. He asked his dad if he smelled the scent of flowers too? His dad said, yes, and that was why he came into the room. His dad started praying the Sorrowful mysteries with him. While they were doing that, his mother came from the other side of the house to see where the scent was coming



Father Michael Sisco

from. They prayed the Glorious mysteries next and by the time they were done, **the whole house REEKED of flowers.** It stayed like that until about an hour after they were done. Now he was starting to seriously think about the priesthood. He was going back and forth in his mind every day: priesthood-marriage, priesthood-marriage. He started to think about Helen and felt that he was crazy to let her get away. He remembered how beautiful, smart and funny she was. They always had a good time together and she was spiritual. So he said, "Alright God, enough of this. If you are calling me to the priesthood, I want a concrete sign today! If I don't get it, then I'm going to call Helen when she gets home from work and ask her to dump the guy she is going out with now and ask her to marry me." So he was sitting there all day, 2:00pm and nothing yet. All day nothing happened. At 6:00pm Helen gets home from work and he decided to give her an extra ten minutes to get in the door. At 6:10pm he starts to go over to the phone. Here he is all banged up from the accident with a cast and he is going to call her and propose to her over the phone. How romantic is that? He hobbles over to the phone and just as he goes to reach for the receiver of the phone to call, he said, "Last chance, God!" Just as his hand touched the receiver of the phone, it rang! He picked up the phone and it was her on the other side. They hadn't talked for months. She said, "Hi, how are you doing?" He said, "Great, how are you doing?" She said that she had been thinking about him all day. He is thinking - YES! He said that he had been thinking about her all day too. She said that she had good news and he said that he had good news too. She said, "Guess what? I'm engaged." He looked up at God and said, that was a cheap shot. That was a lesson to him, never try and back God up into a corner. When you throw the gauntlet of challenge to God he will pick it up and slap you around with it. She said, "What is your big news?" He said that he was going to the seminary to become a priest. She said that you know something? I always knew that you were going to do that. Somehow in my heart, I always knew that you were always going to end up as a priest. So the rest is history. When he got to the seminary he was having a tough time since he was still seeing double. The doctor had made him special glasses that had prisms in the lenses to direct his eyes to focus on the same point on the page so that he could read. But he could only read for about twenty minutes before his eyes would get too tired and go wacky so he couldn't read anymore. In the seminary they give you volumes of stuff you need to read. He was getting behind his other classmates. It got to the point where he started crying thinking he wasn't going to be able to do this. An old retired priest who lived in the seminary, Monsignor Hugh Philips, God rest his soul, had spent his entire life at Mount St. Mary's seminary. This priest happened to be going by and saw him. He came in and asked Michael what was wrong? He told him the situation. Mount St. Mary's is a very special seminary in the United States. It's the second oldest seminary in the country. It has the oldest shrine to the Blessed Mother in the country. It's a grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes, that's up on the hill over the seminary. The priest said, "Michael, I've spent my entire life here. The water that comes from the spring under that grotto, has resulted in good miracles. This is what I want you to do. Tomorrow I want you to go up to the grotto and I want you to put some water on your eyes and I want you to put some water on your head where you got injured in the accident. I want you to say to Our Lady, "I'm here because I'm trying to do the will of your Son, but I can only do that if I have my eyesight." You watch and you will get better. The next day he got up, did what he was told and that night he started studying again. He starts to read his moral theology book. He reads and he reads and he reads. He read for over a half an hour before he realized that he didn't have his glasses on. He has never used them since. Ever since putting some water on his eyes at the grotto, his eyes have been fine. Not bad! Dr. Sheila said that she would call that a miracle and Father Sisco agreed. So **the Lord has shown him the ways in which He is with him. That He is watching over him just the same way the He is watching over all of us. You just have to keep your eyes open for the signs because He is there.**

Next Father Sisco asked the children if they had any questions. One boy asked him, "How many times have you said Mass?" Father Sisco said, "He's been a priest for twelve years, so 365 times 12." Actually he has said on average about two Masses per day. So that is about 8760 Masses he has said since he has been ordained. That's a lot of Masses. Dr. Sheila asked him, "Father Mike, what did it feel like when you said your first Mass?" The first time that I said Mass it was great because all of my preacher friends were around me. They say Mass with you. So the first Mass is really easy and great. The hard thing was saying my second Mass because then he was alone. In fact he had a nightmare the night before. He had this dream that he was all messed up, he was at the altar and said, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." He couldn't remember the rest of the Mass. Some older man in the front was yelling out, "The Lord be with you!" He shouted out the lines of the Mass to him. So the second Mass is a little more challenging for you but you get through it and once you get through that one, you are o.k.

Dr. Sheila mentioned that we were talking about what the difference was between a Mortal sin and a Venial sin and how would saints need to go to confession every day? In order to have Mortal sin it has to 1.) be grave matter, something serious; 2.) sufficient reflection, had to have time to think about it; 3.) full consent of the will,

nobody could have tricked you or forced you into doing it. All three of those conditions have to be there in order for sin to be Mortal. If any of those things are missing, then the sin is Venial.

Next **Father Sisco explained to the children that they should listen to their parents.** He gave this example...sometimes you see an ant and it is walking along the railing and headed for a wall and he is going to have to change direction. The ant can't see that, he can't see what is coming because he doesn't have the advantage that a person has with seeing the whole picture. A person is much bigger than the ant. When the ant gets to the wall he finally realizes that he has to turn around. Sometimes a child is like an ant, who sees what is just in front of him/her and doesn't see all the stuff all around him/her. Your parents, who have been around a lot longer, and have experienced a lot longer have the advantage of seeing the bigger picture. So when you walk along your merry way and your parents say, I don't want you to go that way any more I want you to go this way, and you say, "Why?" because you don't realize when you keep walking that way you are going to hit the wall, but your parents see that. Your parents always try to save you from the experience of running into the wall. Sometimes we just have to trust their judgment.

Everybody in your life is a gift from God. If anyone ever asks you, "What do you think that you are, God's gift to the world?" You can say, "Yes, I am." God made me a gift to the world, and God gave you a gift to the world too. Everyone in this world is a gift to everybody else. **Our challenge as a Christian, is to treat ourselves and everybody else like they are a gift from God.** Your brothers and sisters are gifts from God. Your parents are gifts from God and you need to treat them like they are gifts from God. They are here to guide you and protect you until you are old enough to take care of yourself. Now I'm sure that you all think that you are ready to do that right now, and I promise you that you are not. If you don't believe me then try filling out a tax return and you'll understand that you are not ready for this yet. Your friends at school, are gifts from God because they always remind you that you are not alone. Is there a kid in school that everyone is mean to? If you see that a kid in school is being made fun of or others are being mean to him/her, you go up and be friends with that kid because that kid is a gift from God.

Also, your teachers are gifts from God. So all of these people are gifts from God and we have to treat everybody like gifts from God. One more thing, how many know who Mark Twain was? Ever heard of the books Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer? Those were written by a man named Mark Twain. One of his favorite quotes from Mark Twain is this...when I left home at sixteen, I thought that my father was the biggest fool in the state of Missouri. When I came home at twenty-one, I was amazed at what my father had learned in five years. Well, he is making a joke. What he means is, Mark Twain's father hadn't changed in five years but that he had changed because he had grown up. He suddenly realized that his father had more on the ball than he gave him credit for. Right now you think a certain way and you think that the world should be a certain way. You might think that your parents have no clue at all. But when you get older you're going to realize that your parents had more on the ball than you gave them credit for. When I was a teenager I had some big clashes with my dad. Now as I'm getting older I see myself turning more and more into my father every day. He was a lot smarter than I thought he was when I was a kid. You are going to find that out about your grownups too. So right now, trust them.

One boy asked Father Sisco, "What if you are treating other people like they are gifts from God, but they are not treating you like a gift from God?" Jesus told us we were going to run into people like that. So Jesus said, what good is it to just be nice to those who are nice to you? **What I say to you is, be nice even to the people who are mean to you.** If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other. There are going to be people in this world that will not treat you like you are a gift from God, but we still have to treat them like a gift from God because that is what it means to be Christian. Father Sisco also mentioned this, that a priest can never talk about something he has heard in the confessional because it would be a Mortal sin and he could get kicked out of the priesthood for doing that. That's how sacred the seal of confession is. **Confession is between you, the priest and God and that is it.** No matter how bad your sin is, Jesus will forgive you. Priests hear so many confessions that they don't remember who said what. They all just kind of run together. So you should never be afraid to confess your sins to a priest. We go into the confessional with our attrition and we receive the grace of confession where God gives us by grace what we are lacking in our human nature. **So God takes our attrition and makes it into contrition.** If you forget to confess a sin in the confessional by mistake and not on purpose, you are forgiven anyway. Also, if you are going on your way to get to confession or to get anointed or going to get baptized and you suddenly die along the way, you still would receive all the grace of that sacrament because you had the intention of doing it. God works through the sacraments but He is not restricted to the sacraments. God can go up and beyond the sacraments if it was your intent to go and get that done.

Dr. Sheila asked Father Sisco if he would let the children know how important the Rosary is. **The Rosary is more than just saying Our Fathers and Hail Marys over and over again. It's a prayer about Jesus' life.** In the Joyful mysteries, we have the story of Jesus' birth and the early years of his life. In the Luminous mysteries, we have the story of Jesus' ministry. In the Sorrowful mysteries, we have the story of Jesus' passion and crucifixion and in the Glorious mysteries, we have the story of Jesus' resurrection and ascension into Heaven and the assumption of His mother into Heaven too. So what we have is an abbreviated version of our salvation history. As we are praying the Our Fathers and the Hail Marys, the reason why we have the repetition of the prayers is because it's supposed to slow your mind down and slow your body down. It gets you nice and peaceful while you are thinking about these events that happened in Jesus' life. **Miracles have happened by people praying the Rosary together.** Disasters have been averted and wars have been stopped. Our Blessed Mother in every apparition has always stressed the importance of saying the Rosary. **The Rosary is second only to the Mass.** One boy asked, "How did God make himself?" Father Sisco said that God didn't make himself, he just always was. When God is speaking to Moses in the burning bush, and asks God who shall I tell Pharaoh who sent me? **God said to tell him, "I am, who am."** This means that God has always been. **That is part of the mystery of God, he has no beginning and has no end.** Lastly, Father Sisco blessed all the children and said, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Lord we ask you to send the Holy Spirit for these children always that they might grow in your wisdom and grow in your will. We ask all of this through Christ our Lord, Amen. My little brothers and sisters, the Lord be with you! And also with you! May God bless you always, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. God Bless you Father Michael Sisco!

“Families that pray together, stay together.”

