

Father Felix Hates Confession

LIKE almost everything in the Catholic Church except Confession."

Sometimes we hear this said by some men that we meet. And they often support the statement by adding that it is ridiculous to confess one's sins to the priest who is another man like themselves. "Why can't I just tell God directly that I am sorry for my sins?" they ask.

But one such man whom we will call Mr. Lopez was jolted to hear that a priest, too, can hate Confession. This man was expressing unpleasant opinions about the sacrament before Father Felix, our Question Box columnist. And he was amazed when the old priest unexpectedly agreed with him on the inconvenience and discomfort of Confession.

"Oh, so you hate confession," Father Felix cut in. "Well, I hate it, too. Or at least sometimes I do. Sometimes I think that Confession is very disagreeable and uncomfortable."

Mr. Lopez looked at Father Felix in amazement.

"If that is the case," he asked "if you sometimes hate Confession, Father, why do you hear so many Confessions. Yesterday afternoon, I met you in the plaza and you told me you could not stop to talk to me because you must hear Confessions. Why do you continue doing this, if you think Confession is such a bad thing?"

"Wait a minute, Mr. Lopez," Father Felix said. "Please don't misquote me. I did not say that Confession was a bad thing. I said that sometimes I hated it and found it uncomfortable and disagreeable. But I don't think that it is a bad thing. In fact, I think it is something wonderful and beautiful."

Seeing Mr. Lopez a bit puzzled, Father Felix continued.

"I think Confession is good because of the results achieved through it. But I often dislike it, because it is a hard and patience-trying work. In the Confessional you often hear so much of the seamy and sad side of life. And what's more, I don't like to go to Confession myself. I don't like to hu-

miliate myself by telling my sins to another man."

Here, Mr. Lopez nodded vigorously in agreement. The old priest went on.

"But in the end result, there is nothing more beautiful in all the world than Confession, because it brings happiness to sad souls and it brings back sinlessness to sinful souls, to make them pleasing and beautiful in the eyes of Almighty God."

Mr. Lopez was quiet and thoughtful for a little while. "You seem to have something there, Father," he said after the silence. "But still I guess I am not completely satisfied. How do we know that God wants us to go to Confession?"

"We know that," answered Father Felix, "from the Holy Bible. Here you will read that our Divine Lord once said to the Apostles, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations whatsoever I have commanded you and behold, I will be with you for all days even unto the consummation of the world.'

"This was the institution of the sacrament of Penance or Confession. These words of our Divine Lord were uttered when He was laying the foundation for the Catholic Church. He was giving directions to His Apostles and to their successors 'for all days even unto the consummation of the world.'"

Mr. Lopez remained silent. "You know, Mr. Lopez," Father Felix said, "when the afternoon is hot and I don't want to go into the confessional, some-fleeting questions cross my mind. I ask 'why our Divine Lord instituted this sacrament? Why did He place such a burden upon the priests, forcing them to spend a large part of their priestly life hearing confessions? Why did He institute this sacrament thus forcing men to humiliate themselves by telling their sins to their own fellowmen?"

"But I quickly dismiss the questions. I hasten to erase any doubts about the wisdom of Almighty God in this or in any of His other edicts. For surely, God knows

best what is good for man. And further, if we look at the subject with our own limited human ability, we certainly can see justification for it. We remember that God wants man to cooperate in the spreading of His Kingdom and in the salvation of the human race. He could have sent angels to help us. Or He could have provided us entirely with direct infusion of spiritual grace so necessary during the battle of life. But instead, He has made it clear that He also wants men to help. He has even made one mere man His Own Vicar, who is our Holy Father the Pope."

"But if God wants to give importance to man," asked Mr. Lopez, "why does He want man to humiliate himself?"

"Yes, confessing to a mere man is humiliating," Father Felix said. "But you and I, Mr. Lopez, are getting old and you will agree, I think, that humiliation often is good for our soul. Perhaps the greatest sin in the world is pride. It is the sin which brought Satan and the other evil spirits to hell when they tried to make gods out of themselves. It is the sin that makes hells out of happy homes and produces chaos and

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OUR COVER

"Feast of the Assumption" by Artist Jose O. Celestino.



FUTURE FINANCIER.

Father: "There you are, asking for money again. You just don't know the value of a peso."

Son: "Sure I know the value of a peso, father. That's the reason I asked for two."

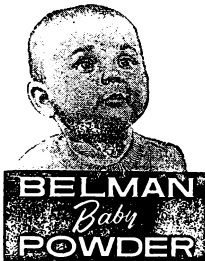


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OPERATIONS....

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found that only four were using fertilizer for their crops, only one employed the "Magasana" and "Margate" systems of rice planting, only a few used ready-mixed feeds for their poultry, and some even had superstitious beliefs and practices in their farming.

Mr. Talian reports that now these farmers are beginning to adopt the scientific techniques learned from his class. They are abandoning antiquated ways of soil cultivation and livestock raising.

The soil of Mambajao has been enriched by centuries of lava flow from towering Hibok-Hibok. With their newly learned methods, these farmers are better equipped to bring out the greatest potential of the land.

CHRIST CALLS....

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together, and went to Mass each Sunday together. We ate our meals together, and picnicked and clowned around and pillow-fought together. In Tondo, there are not many happy homes because there are so many empty houses. If it's not the parents, it's the children who run away. I never thought of running away from home — even to a place called seminary. But it was at home where Christ began to call me. Because Christ was there.

I heard the call again on a camping-hike. We were Boy Scouts. Eight in that band that day. It was a windy day. I saw one of my comrades run to chase his wind-blown cap. The next second, I saw him smashed under the heavy tires of a lumber truck. A screech, a shriek, and he was dead. It happened so quickly. I didn't even find time to think. And when I recovered from the shock, I started to think. And I thought of becoming a priest. At first, I could not quite see the connection. I shrugged it off like a silly idea, and I picked up from where I left off. I re-joined my gang and tried to have a good time.

I heard the call again in a dancing hall. Very bright and full of balloons, and plenty to eat. It was our Freshmen-Sophomore Prom. I was Mr. Sophomore, and I was dancing with Miss Sophomore. It was a funny place indeed for Mr. Sophomore in his right mind to wish to become a priest. But Mr. Sophomore in that dancing hall did wish to become a priest. And he was in his right mind.

This time, I decided to give what I

FATHER FELIX....

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confusion in despotical governments. Humiliation is good for the soul, Mr. Lopez."

"And so, when you and I go to Confession, provided only that we mention all of our mortal sins and are truly sorry for them, resolving to do our best not to sin again, through this humiliation, we can not only cleanse our souls of sin but we can also achieve peace and happiness.

"We may dislike ill-tasting medicine. But we know that it is good for our body. We know that it will bring pulsating physical health back to our diseased organs and limbs. So we take it. Similarly, through the disagreeable ordeal of sacramental confession, an ordeal instituted by Jesus Christ Himself according to the Holy Bible, we can bring pulsating life to our souls.

"Confession sometimes is disagreeable," Father Felix concluded, "but in its results, it is beautiful, it is heavenly."

thought was a silly thought a chance. I told it to my parish priest. He promised to pray over it with me. He urged me to start attending daily Mass. And I did. My folks were puzzled. And, of course, I felt awkward.

I heard the call again and again; and I knew that Christ really wanted a Tondo boy. And I felt somehow that He wanted me. It was hard to believe. But I knew that this was the beginning of the end — end of all my silly ideas like smoking cigars and drinking high-balls. For now I finally began to learn how to think sense . . . because I finally learned how to pray. And I saw everything fall into place; the cigars and high-balls and Tarzans and jazz and noise — things to which I clung most vehemently like an urchin to his paper-toys. What if the wind had blown the wrong way the day my friend died, and drove me instead chasing my own Scout-cap to my own death? Or, what if Mr. Sophomore had dropped dead in the middle of a jazz? What if . . . ? Contrary to fact conditions of course! Perhaps, it was because God wanted me to live on, and become a priest. Certainly, Tondo needs another one. Perhaps, Tondo needs me.

Not long ago, I met an old chum from Tondo. His name is Ben. He, too, wants to become a priest. He cannot believe it himself. "I feel too normal for that", he chuckled. I chuckled with him.

"I felt too normal too", I said. "Perhaps that's why Christ is calling you as He has called me. Because if priests weren't normal. He wouldn't wish to call them in the first place. Because they won't last."