

The Stone Rolled Back

Twenty-six years ago:

I was told I was very brave. I had and still have no idea what bravery had to do with it. I was headed to Confession after decades of living out the arrogant presumption that life could be lived on my own terms.

No, bravery didn't enter into it at all. I was desperately searching for meaning and stability as worlds caved in around me. Perhaps it always takes a little courage to enter unfamiliar territory but I was way beyond that; the old familiar territories had become passing strange and the Church, seen from afar, was the only remaining land that still flew the flag of hope and constancy above its battlements.

And so I made my confession, an act rendered simple because I had kept none of the Big Ten... *Father, I broke them all except for...no, wait, I broke that one, too.*

I expected nothing more from Confession than to be conformed to the Church. Whatever it meant, I wanted to be Catholic, to be taken into the fold. Absolution was given, penance said. I walked back through the darkened nave, down the center aisle towards the great entryway. *Well and good*, I thought; *so that was that*. And then I pushed through the doors...

Stunned! By the light, the warmth, the green. I took it all in like a child awakening from sleep, eyes dazzled by the brilliance. But this awakening caused no pain. Rather, here was visceral joy that had not been felt in years, anesthetized as it had been by sensual stimulation and unshed tears driven deep down into my shoes, kept there by the hope that time would erase the sorrow. But nothing is ever erased. Things can, however, be transformed.

Even before I understood the supernatural power of the confessional, the Holy Spirit rushed in to illuminate – to magnify – the profound effect that this simple act of faith had accomplished in my soul. Not a particularly *good* confession, I don't think; just a mechanical listing of sins. But there, that *is* Confession: Forgiveness imparted, even to those of us who don't understand the full impact of our sins and so repent imperfectly, but who are prepared to invite Christ in to change our lives.

Until that moment, the collapse of my old ways had not manifested itself concretely. But now, like the huge boulder sealing the tomb, the deadly weight of three decades of sin had been rolled back. By the grace of God and through the love of Jesus Christ, he who had been dead walked again into the light.

Alleluia, He is risen. He is risen indeed!

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