***I QUIT!!!***

When Lent approaches I would imagine that most of us are pondering what we will be doing and/or not doing:

* Meatless Wednesdays and Fridays
* No eating between meals
* Two and one-half meals per day with meat at only one meal (except Wednesday and Friday when there is no meat)
* No alcohol
* In other words — the usual basic Lenten regimen or rule that Holy Mother Church has followed for centuries.
* So is our Lenten observance simply related to “what goes into the mouth?” Or have we pondered what comes out of the mouth as Holy Scripture tells us?
* We need to quit:
  + Harboring ill will
  + Holding grudges
  + Being condescending and arrogant
  + Needing always to be “right” while everyone else is wrong
  + Speaking ill of others
  + Repeating “fake news” as if it were verifiable
  + Gossip
  + Slandering others
  + Demonstrating body language that conveys disdain

All of this — as starting points, will help us make our Confessions, which if we call ourselves “traditional, conservative, orthodox” we will all be doing.

The question is “why?” How can we expect others to be more forgiving of us if we are not willing to swallow hard, and start afresh with many relationships? So, let’s pause and think about who and what we are upset about. Is our upset state helping us be a better person? Is it a good advertisement for being a Christian? (“Join my church and you can be just like me.”) Once we can name those people and those situations, how can we let go of our judgments and allow God to be God?

I occasionally say to people that they need to take a moment and pretend that they are entering a room where everyone whom they dislike is present. Another group then enters of people who dislike us. Then I ask that they do a count of those who are present. Now picture Jesus entering the room. He greets them all with a loving smile because He was willing to die on the Cross for everyone who is present including us. Obviously, the question is: “If Jesus has forgiven me — why can’t I forgive others?”

In the end, when we prepare for Lent and as we prepare to make our Confessions we need to say “I quit!” I quit carrying resentments and bitterness with me. Giving up foods and fasting usually only benefits us, spiritually speaking, but saying “I quit” sinful behaviors benefits many including myself. Imagine what it would be like, on Judgment Day, to discover that each one of our angers, resentments, bitterness, and grudges all had a weight, and we carried them with us, and when we saw Jesus and took a step forward, we discovered that the weight was too heavy for us to move. It’s time to quit and to drop those weights. In an age, that is often focused on “weight loss” God has already given us an extraordinary “weight loss program” — Confession, Contrition, Absolution, and Amendment of Life.