

**RETURN TO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART**  
**Lenten Communal Penance Service, 4.4.19**



As both a wise spiritual guide and someone who understood human nature and all its complexity, St. Francis de Sales located the heart as the center and source of who we are and what we're all about. In his book the *Treatise on the Love of God*, he wrote:

*Since the heart is the source of our actions, as the heart is so are they.... for whoever has Jesus Christ in his heart will soon have him in all his outward ways. ...As our beloved Jesus lives in your heart, so too he will live in all your conduct and he will be revealed by your eyes, mouth, hands, yes even the hair on your head.... In short, whoever wins a person's heart has won the whole person."*

His teaching echoes the wisdom of the author of Proverbs who said: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* (Proverbs 4:23) And in Matthew's gospel, Jesus said it even more succinctly: *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6:21).

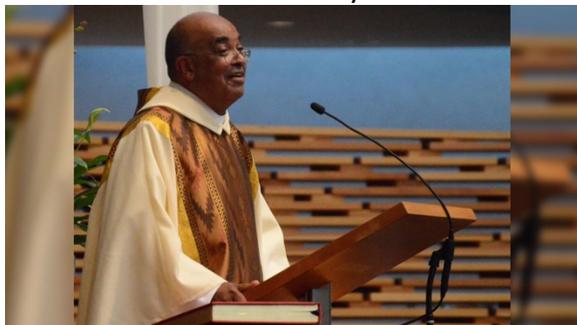


So this heart of ours, this center of our being and source of our doing, is core to who we are. In the movie "Return to Me" (2008), the tragic death of one human being saved the life of another. A happily-married building contractor, Bob, is struck with tragedy when his young wife, Elizabeth, a renown veterinarian, dies from complications of a car accident. In her death, however, another is given life. Another young woman with an ailing heart, Grace, is given a transplant – the heart of Elizabeth. Finally able to live a normal, happy life for the first time in years, she joins her grandfather in helping to run an Irish-themed restaurant, where she meets Bob, the widower, never imagining that the heart beating in her chest belonged to his wife.



They slowly fall in love with each other, but when Grace learns the shocking truth, she's torn by whether or not she should let him know about the transplant she received and who it came from. The heart beating within her is the heart he first loved. The title of the movie couldn't be more perfect – *Return to Me*. And it's a perfect theme for our reconciliation tonight. No matter who we are or what we've done or failed to do – no matter our age or status in life – married or single, a youth or a senior, healthy or in pain, gay or straight, male or female, enthusiastic or down in the dumps – the Lord's message is the same to all of us: *"Return to me. Let go of whatever prevents your heart from beating with mine. Return to me."*

Tonight we each expose our heart – to ourselves in an examination of conscience, to one another as we commonly confess our sins and to God who alone can heal the brokenhearted. The confessors who have gathered with us do so in the same spirit. Our own hearts are heavy with the recent news reports of the failures of two priests in our diocese and the deaths of several of our fellow priests. Fr. Jim was with Fr. Jay Matthews, vicar of the Cathedral, on Saturday evening when he died. Jay had just celebrated the Saturday evening Mass at the Cathedral and was with Jim and another priest sharing dinner when Jay’s heart gave out – suddenly and unexpectedly – leaving a big hole in the hearts of the many who loved him and whom he faithfully served.



Our Examination of Conscience this evening will be accompanied by images to spark our own thoughts and prayer. Some images will illustrate a defect or illness of the heart; other images will depict the cure. Hopefully, they will help us to be in touch with our own hearts as we bring them before the Lord in this Lenten time of renewal.

*John Kasper, OSFS*

### **Examination of Conscience**

Is my heart **selfish**?

Do I resist the communal aspects of life?

Is my heart **self-centered**?

Do I value others only for what I can gain from them?

Is my heart **mediocre**?

Am I remiss in my obligations?

Is my heart **vengeful**?

Do I return evil for evil?

Is my heart **cruel**?

Do I inflict punishment on others?

Is my heart **fearful**?

Do I lack trust in the power of God’s grace?

Is my heart **indifferent**?

Do I lack commitment and willingness to help others?

Is my heart **uncooperative**?

Do I resist sharing my talents with others?

Is my heart **ruthless**?

Do I take advantage of others?

Is my heart **unjust**?

Do I deal with others unfairly?

Is my heart **sinful**?

Do I choose destructive behavior?

Is my heart **disobedient**?

Do I make choices against God’s will?

Is my heart **impure**?

Am I unfaithful to my commitment of sexual love?

Is my heart **arrogant**? Do I despise others?

Is my heart **impenitent**? Do I resist conversion?

Is my heart **closed**? Do I not let myself be influenced by the goodness around me?

Is my heart **dishonest**? Do I lack integrity?

Is my heart **deceptive**?

Do I lack transparency in my relationships with others?

Is my heart **unfaithful**?

Do I betray the trust others have in me?

Is my heart **corrupted**?

Do I want to cling to evil ways and attitudes?

Is my heart **grateful**?

Do I thank God and others for my blessings?

Is my heart **humble**?

Do I appreciate the goodness of others?

Is my heart **spiritual**?

Do I see the presence of the Spirit in this life’s events?

Is my heart **serene**?

Do I realize that only God can fulfill our emptiness?

Is my heart all-**embracing**?

Do I share the joys and pains of others?