

Press Release

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ON LINE CONFESSIONAL LAUNCHED

PHILADELPHIA, PA, FEBRUARY 24, 2009: The Parish of Saint Miriam has once again done it a little differently! Just in time for the Holy Season of Lent, their pastor decided to try a new way to get people back to the confessional. His answer: on line! For the first time, a person can now go to confession online and receive the Sacrament from a priest. "The site has recently undergone some needed revisions and so we decided to make it also a bit easier for people to cleanse themselves and heal", said Father Jim, pastor of this growing community. "Confession attendance is down across the Catholic spectrum, and a recent survey by our church shows people are ashamed and afraid. I think it awful that someone would be afraid to sit with me or a fellow priest, but it is reality. So, we are changing that, too!" He continued.

The newly revised site has increased security, needed to ensure that only the eyes of a priest would ever 'hear' the sent confessions. They also spent time in making the navigation easier and adding new photos and new flash detail. Finally, the 'online confessional' explains all about the sacrament, why it is important, how it works, and then provides a means for the person going to confession to submit their

'sins'. After they may then choose to meet with a priest in person, receive counseling and pastoral care online, or speak over the telephone and/or via email.

"We took this decision very seriously when we created it," said Father Jim. "But we feel it is a good decision in keeping with our commitment to God's people." You also must have a verifiable email and full name as there is no such thing as an 'anonymous' confession' at this site.

The Roman Catholic Church (Latin Rite) believes that the penitent and the priest must be in the same physical location. The RC Church maintains that it must take place in a public venue - like a church - because it is a personal and a corporate act. "At Saint Miriam, we believe this to also be true, but we also maintain that God brings people together in marvelous and unique ways!" continued Father Jim. "So, God is truly present then between priest and penitent as they make a confession, even online." And, since our priest brings your confessions with him to the Eucharist Table weekly in and their private devotions, the act is at once both a personal act of confession, and a celebrated act of the entire community of believers. The final act - the absolution formula and penance- will be sent to the confessing person in return; "so all aspects of the sacrament are met; just in a time-sensitive manner unique to the online environment," said the pastor.

At barely 11 months of age, the newest Catholic parish of Saint Miriam, in the Roxborough neighborhood of Philadelphia, is growing strong. They already boast over 75 members with an average Sunday attendance of between 35-45 parishioners; and the panorama of deeply inspiring and personal stories would be impressive by any measure.

In such a short amount of time, they have healed many souls already. They boast two families with children along with many gay and lesbian and straight couples, too. Single men and woman, and even a few former Roman Catholic nuns, make up their diverse population. They also have already achieved two new seminarians. All of this as they grow to include everyone without reservation.

Once more, this growing parish community is housed within the Reconstructionist Jewish Synagogue of Mishkan Shalom. This congregation felt it a sacred duty to co-locate with Saint Miriam, as they were once housed with a Christian Community when they were first formed. Now, they are repaying the favor forward. Further, both communities have a lot in common: they are bent on social justice issues, have inspiring services with unique modern twists, they serve the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and their community, and they believe that everyone is welcome regardless of any societal label.

Saint Miriam has two services each week, Thursdays at 6PM and Sundays at 10:30 AM. The services are Catholic, but inclusive and inspiring with a mix of music from old and new, modern touches and incense smoke that finally warms the heart, as well as the senses!

Please contact Father Jim St. George for more information or visit www.MySaintMiriam.org.

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