We spend a large amount of our waking hours preparing for the future. We work hard to obtain a high-quality education so that we can have a fulfilling career; we ensure our financial security by saving for our retirement; and we prepare for potential catastrophes by purchasing insurance to protect our cars, homes and health. Although all of these preparations are vitally important, I wonder how much time we spend assessing our past and learning from those experiences, so that we can better prepare ourselves for our future.

Recently, I read a fascinating novel entitled *The October List* by popular author Jeffery Deaver. The novel was unique in that it began on Chapter 36 and ended with Chapter One, beginning on a Sunday night and ending on the previous Friday. The novel starts (Chapter 36) as follows:

*Gabriela waits desperately for news of her abducted daughter. At last, the door opens. But it’s not the negotiators. It’s not the FBI. It’s the kidnapper. And he has a gun.*

As the novel moved backwards in time, the author showed me that the assumptions that I had made at the time when I first began reading the story without enough knowledge of the past were all wrong. Those characters that I thought were good turned out to be bad, and many of the apparent “bad” guys were actually good.

As we reflect on our lives, Jesus has provided us with a wonderful opportunity by which we can review our past. The sacrament of penance and reconciliation provides us with this very significant opportunity to review, have sins forgiven and move into the future with God’s graces.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he imparted upon the apostles the ability to forgive sins:

“One peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed upon them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’

Although our sins are forgiven...