

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Confession is good for the Soul...

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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Owning one's faults is a good start to being a mature and wholesome person. In these days of shifting blame, denials and sometimes false apologies it is worthwhile considering why it is important to be aware of one's fallibility and honesty, or rather lack of it. Indeed, we live in a blame culture – if you can find someone else to be guilty of your misdemeanour or sin then just shift the responsibility to them. Our Lord makes much out of such manoeuvres.

It is clear from the Gospel that Jesus not only encouraged honesty but went deeper and behind such issues – always ready to forgive He nevertheless was not slow to point out any pharisaical attitude or hidden fault. We have many examples of Jesus urging and encouraging remorse. The woman taken in adultery being one example, while being tender, He also urged her to sin no more. The thief on the cross' acknowledgement brought instant reward from Jesus. Peter of all people, learnt of the great power of forgiveness and purification necessary in his denial of Jesus and then acceptance of his weakness.

Now perhaps some of you, already seeing the word confession have decided not to read on and think that this is not a very 'encouraging' word. Yet Jesus bequeathed the power of forgiveness to the Apostles and His priests as 'sacrament' and in 'charity' to us all. Did He not say 'Whose sins you *shall forgive they are forgiven* and whose sins you retain they shall be retained' (not forgiven) (John 20:22).

So let us speak of the gift of Confession - To confess is to state, proclaim or 'own' something. We can confess, state the position too, and we can confess or profess our love for someone. This is a good starting point for the Sacrament. It is undoubtedly a confession, an owning, not only of our faults and sins but also our love for the Lord (and each other) who gave/gives us so much. Our sorrow stems from 'hurting' the one who loves us and cares for us. This love bond is the key to understanding confession *as a gift...*

'O sinner- come to Jesus Heart, come to the cleansing of His most Precious Blood – he awaits you with open arms to embrace.'

Over the years I have greatly benefitted from the grace and kindness of this Sacrament. I also know that many acquaintances thought that it was odd that I should favour frequent confession, Some thought it old fashioned or more kindly, they simply declared that they could never think of anything to say, save their very ordinary faults or omissions which in their eyes were not sins at all but merely 'just being human' and of course we are, and fallible. But instead of this attitude I found confession, or reconciliation, a never ending revelation of who I am before God. I found His bounty and love sometimes overwhelming. I also found myself realising something that I was not even aware of as I spoke and listened to myself. I was inspired to go deeper still. I, like so many people, in spite of every attempt would sometimes sit quietly and be 'blank' but knowing that, in the worst case, I could mention one fault from the past. Yet never have I been let down and 'out of the blue' so to speak, something would come out of my mouth and heart. My prayer for help was thus answered. The Holy Spirit is active in these situations and always came to my rescue. Persistence is important for grace to operate.



There is also the feeling that only very big sins, called mortal have to be confessed. This is of course true but it is in the smaller sins that we can slowly erode our conscience and a growing awareness of these can be a good preventative measure, a check, if you like, of the dangers of treading into situations that might be disastrous for us.

Today we have the benefit of being able to have both open and closed confessional situations.

St. Veronica Giuliani

This therefore should not be a bar to the nervous or those who are uncomfortable. We also have a starter position in ‘services of reconciliation’ which turns our attention to what is important. If we are worried or nervous it is always a good starting point to tell the priest that this so. He can then help you. Remember that he is there instead of Jesus and is there to assist you. It is not a torture chamber but a place of solace, encouragement, listening, and forgiveness and dare I say **Joy**. We leave renewed revitalize and reborn. Why would anyone reject this gift? We also know of the utter confidentiality of any statement. Indeed it is a grave matter (with sanctions) should that ever be breached, and it never is. Most confessors are well practiced at forgetting.

Some people worry that the priest will think less of them- but he too has to go to confession and he is often only too aware of his own weaknesses. But we are confessing to Jesus himself, which hopefully we have already done in our hearts, so we are simply saying what has already happened in our minds and heart.



Though a sober thought and it does happen – we can never know when we are called, and our life can end quite suddenly but we can then go in a state of grace.

We can think of confession as lovely meeting point in a special way with Jesus. During lockdown I felt quite bereft, of this encounter with Jesus. Only rarely able to receive this sacrament... the relief and joy I felt at being able to sit in a garden and speak to the Lord in this way, a great blessing and hope-filled.

So next month at the very start of March we have Ash Wednesday and Lent. Perhaps during February we can start to enter into this space of grace and prepare to receive the Sacrament of peace. . . This is more so if it has been a long time since we have done so? We are bound to do so at least once a year about this time. But let us do so with great thanksgiving. Ponder this deeply in your heart. Jesus goes out to the lost sheep and rejoices over each one as does the whole of Heaven.....

Please feel free to copy and distribute

Remember this....

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:7) Halina Holman

Pope Francis

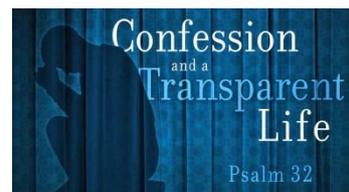
“Even I go to confession every fifteen days, because the Pope is also a sinner. And the confessor listens to what I tell him, he advises me and absolves me because we are all in need of this forgiveness” Rome

“... when you go to confession, to this fountain of My mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My Heart always flows down upon your soul and ennoble it. Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself in My Mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity. The torrents of grace inundate humble souls. The proud remain always in poverty and misery, because My grace turns away from them to humble souls.”

Jesus to St. Faustyna, Divine Mercy in My Soul

Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life. I ask your forgiveness and now turn from everything which I know is wrong. Thank you for dying on the cross for me to set me free from my sins. Please come into my life and fill me with your Holy Spirit and be with me forever. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen”



Feast Days in February

- 1st St. Brigid
- 2nd The Presentation of the Lord, ‘Candlemas’
- 3rd St. Blaise
- 5th St. Agatha
- 6th Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 10th St. Scholastica
- 11th Our Lady of Lourdes (World D. of P. for the Sick)**
- 13th Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 14th Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Patrons of Europe
- 17th Seven Founders of the Servite Order
- 20th Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 21st St. Peter Damien
- 22nd The Chair of St. Peter, Apostle
- 23rd St. Polycarp
- 27th Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
- 28th St. Oswald