

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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So Sorry...

...two little word that we all have to say from time to time but are they mere words.? As we enter into Lent a time of a 'change of heart', they are well worth pondering and praying over. We live in a world that does not readily admit error easily and would rather find excuses that admit the truth. We seem to leap to defend ourselves at the 'drop of a hat' or even admit to the possibility of a mistake being made. Sometimes the mistake is trivial and not of serious matter, yet we stumble over these words. We live in a culture that wants retribution and blame being put on somebody else rather than ourselves. There is something wrong in a society that believes that other people are guilty of our faults and errors. Owning one's mistakes is a sign of maturity and growth.

I once read a children's story about a little boy who had broken a plate while climbing up to get some biscuits which he was not supposed to have either. He felt that this would get him 'told off' so he started to concoct a story. The fact that he would compound the mistake by lying did not enter his head either, or that his parents would forgive him, if he told the truth. The tales became stranger and stranger and with 'ten out of ten' for inventiveness, he started to run out of excuses. So with a flourish he ended by saying, 'well, I don't know how you missed him but a big elephant came in and knocked over the plate and he was hungry so he ate all the biscuits. By this time the mother was trying very hard not to laugh but simply said 'well in that case we better give all your biscuits in future to the elephant as we cannot have a hungry elephant. Finally with a squirm the little boy owned up to the truth probably to make sure that he still had the biscuits. The mother explained that all he had to say was 'I am sorry' and that would have been the end of the tale maybe with a little admonition for disobedience. (There may be a little of the Adam and Eve here.)

Now this may seem like just a tale about a child but



are we not all a little childish at time, and act similarly. So many excuses fill my thoughts with this of cover ups and falsehood. How many of us have not owned to being late for the real reason at times, or forgetting to do somethings and making up a reason for not doing so... How many times, more seriously have we need to apologise for a quarrel or family dispute but rely on others to simply forgive us or gloss over it. Unspoken lack of apology can build up over time and cause further issues when a simply 'it's my fault' can bring people together.

We often concentrate on forgiveness rather than apologies for error. Forgiveness is a beautiful and wonderful trait in anyone, and over serious issues it is a saint maker, but we must not tread heavily or rely on the other person to always forgive us but learn to accept responsibility. It is always good to hear someone saying and accepting a mistake and just simply saying that they are sorry. This often leads the other person to leave the issue and produce the forgiveness required and the matter ends. It is something that we should teach our children to do from a very early age so that it becomes easier. There are many ways of saying 'sorry', but the acceptance of error is the key. Many marriages have been saved when two people have learned to be truthful and accepting of error or actions that hurt the other person. Many couples have learnt this simple truth and have in their heart the well being of the other, never letting a dispute of hurt fester till the next morning.

Clearly Jesus did not ever have to apologise for anything, but we do hear Him expressing that he 'felt sorry for someone' and certainly totally forgave those who condemned Him to death. His forgiveness is absolute and should give us the courage to say those little words much more often. His compassion led him to action like raising the widow's son.....

(Luke 7:11-15.)

"The most deadly poison of our times is indifference." Saint Maximilian Kolbe

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His sorrow led to action which was healing. In the same way our regret and sorrow can have a healing effect on others too. It isn't only accepting our faults that matters but the harm that it can do to the other person if we do not..! Sorrow and regret often precede apology and give us the courage to apologise.

However, there is another side to accepting fault. Often public servants have read statements of seeming regret or apology that sound rather like a obligation rather than a 'sincerely meant' acceptance of error or serious omission. We too can fall into the same trap. Any apology has to come from the heart and be expressed by tone of voice, our general attitude and how we approach someone. Throwaway lines can do even more harm and hurt. It is very important to say sorry in a way that conveys genuine regret. Continued apologies are worthless if not meant and only a cover for lack of genuineness and attempts to change. Indeed, too frequent use of the 'word' simply to make thing easier for oneself without any sincerity will have the opposite effect. We have to be careful that what we are apologising for is something that requires an apology.

Words matter as Martin McDonald says in an article in 'Restoration'. He says that the words we use are important. And says sometimes it is fitting to say 'I apologise, such as in a statement correcting a public error'... however, he says, "in more personal and intimate matters it can come across as cold and impersonal, 'I am sorry' sounds and feels much warmer and it may be what someone need to hear from us."

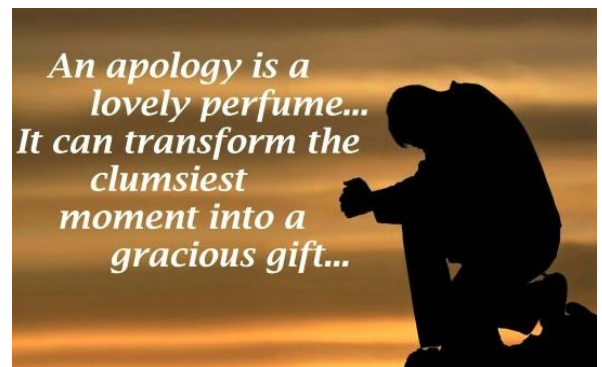
Finally there are no more important words or sorrow than those expressed to God. How vital it is to end each day with an 'I am sorry' to Our Father in Heaven. So too must we do so during the 'confessions of sins' at the start of Mass... These can be healing for us as we know that the Father forgives us. He delights in our regret for it is then that we demonstrate our love for Him. We are sorry because we love him and want to please Him and He showers us with blessings. Real repentance can make us sorrowful and it is wise to remember that being sorry can make us grow and become more humble, hopefully because we have learned how fragile

we are.... Maybe during this Lent we can ponder our use of these 'little words' but also pray the 'I confess' with greater humility and sincerity and learn how to use them to others. Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"It is not by chance that in the prayer taught by Jesus, the Lord's prayer that summarises all the essential questions for our life, we find the expression 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Acknowledging our errors and being willing to restore what has been removed – respect, sincerity, love – makes one worthy of forgiveness. ... If we are not capable of apologising, it means we are not capable of forgiveness either. ... Many hurt feelings, many lesions in the family begin with the loss of those precious words: 'I am sorry.' In married life there are many arguments ... but I advise you never to let the day end without making peace. And for this, a small gesture is enough."

Rome, May 13, 2015



Prayer Intention: We pray for Christians facing new medical/scientific challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

Feast Days in March

1st St. David, Patron of Wales

2nd Ash Wednesday: Fasting & Abstinence

4th St. Casimir

6th First Sunday of Lent

7th Ss. Perpetua & Felicity

8th St. John of God, 9th St. Frances of Rome

10th St. John Ogilvie (Scotland)

13th Second Sunday of Lent

15th St. Louise de Murillac

17th St. Patrick

18th St. Cyril of Jerusalem

19th St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

20th Third Sunday of Lent

25th The Annunciation of the Lord

27th Fourth Sunday of Lent

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