



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

February 2020

My dear friends and colleagues,

One of the often misunderstood aspects of The Faith which can be the cause of comments, and even hostility, from those who choose to close their minds to anything which does not fit their view, is the Sacrament of Penance. This is otherwise known as Confession or Reconciliation. With Lent on the near horizon it might be worth considering making use of this opportunity to “clear the decks” during the approach to Easter, and ask ourselves the question: *Why confess our sins to a priest?*



As Catholic Christians, we confess our sins to God through His minister the priest in the Sacrament of Confession. This does not mean we can't also confess to God directly, if in fact, we feel we should do both. The “advantages” to confessing to a priest are: *the Church's guarantee of absolution to the truly penitent; spiritual counselling; humility; help in overcoming self-deception; and settling our minds in matters of sin;* and, most importantly, the *sacramental grace* received from absolution. None of these are tangible benefits obtained in private confessions to God. Like St Paul, when he writes to the Colossians (ch. 1:18), Catholic Christians believe the Church is, in a mysterious way, the Body of Christ living in the world today, and that therefore God will answer our request for forgiveness and mercy in union with this Mystical Body of Christ.

Some object that confessing to a priest is not biblical. But in John 20 we read of Christ appearing to the disciples on Easter Day. He breathed on the apostles giving them the authority to forgive, or not to forgive. This means they had to *hear* the sins in order to forgive/not forgive. Jesus then says “as the Father has sent me, so send I you”. This means the apostles are to continue Christ's mission, part of which is the forgiveness of sins. In 2 Corinthians, St Paul describes the apostles as ambassadors of Christ's work of reconciliation. In the Epistle of James we read that the presbyters (priests) are called to pray for the sick and forgive their sins. Why are priests called to perform this task? Obviously, priests have an authority, explicitly conferred at Ordination, that unordained Christians do not.

It is clear that Christ gave the apostles, and therefore their successors, the power to forgive sins. It is well worth giving consideration to making good use of this gift which Christ has left to His Church.

Wishing you a fruitful and holy Lent, in which you draw closer to God.

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As Lent Approaches

As we move towards the beginning of Lent and we examine our lives afresh for the Fast, we might well wonder what God has in mind for us, and what His reasons are. The words of John Henry Newman, canonised by the Roman Catholic Church last October, may be helpful as we ponder these questions.

“God was all-complete; all-blessed in Himself; but it was His will to create a world for His glory. He is Almighty, and might have done all things Himself, but it has been His will to bring about His purposes by the beings He has created. We are all created to His glory – we are created to do His will. I am created to do something or to be something for which no one else is created; I have a place in God’s counsels, in God’s world, which no one else has; whether I be rich or poor, despised or esteemed by man, God knows me and calls me by my name.



God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. Somehow I am necessary for His purposes, as necessary in my place as an Archangel in his – if, indeed, I fail, He can raise another, as He could make the stones children of Abraham. Yet I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connexion between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments and serve Him in my calling.

Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may shorten it; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide the future from me – still He knows what He is about.

O Adonai, O Ruler of Israel, Thou that guidest Joseph like a flock, O Emmanuel, O Sapientia, I give myself to Thee. I trust Thee wholly. Thou art wiser than I – more loving to me than I myself. Deign to fulfil Thy high purposes in me whatever they be – work in and through me. I am born to serve Thee, to be Thine, to be Thy instrument. Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see – I ask not to know – I ask simply to be used.”

– John Henry Newman



Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes with which Christ looks out his compassion to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.

— Saint Teresa of Avila —

(As a small self-indulgence I will often use as a “desk picture” some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it!)