

NEWSLETTER

Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle and St Joseph, Douglas

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16th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 23rd July 2023

(Page 105 in Mass Book)

(Year A for Sundays) (Cycle 2 for weekdays)

Dear Parishioners

At every Mass we are invited to **call to mind our sins**. When I'm asked to give absolution and the anointing of the sick to someone who's dying, I usually say 'I'm sure you're sorry for all your sins'. Occasionally family members around the bed intervene to comment 'but my Mum has no sins'..... If I'm lucky enough to see the priest before I die, I'll have plenty of sins to 'call to mind'. But the word *sin* is not fashionable.

The usual response to accusations of 'Sleaze' from people in public life is to deny. Never do we hear anyone say '*through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault*'.

Commenting on the recent scandal involving the Irish national broadcaster RTE, Irish Times journalist **Fintan O'Toole** had this to say:

People caught up in scandals could take a tip from the monks. Instead of hiring very expensive crisis managers, well known people caught up in scandals might take some tips from an admittedly unlikely source: the Catholic Church. Over the past 2,000 years, it has to have come up with some good ideas about giving up 'yer oul' sins.

*The most influential Irish invention of all time is **the Christian sacrament of penance**. It was Irish monks in their stony cells who solved one of the great problems of humanity: how to forgive and be forgiven.*

Before they did this there was a bleak binary: you were either saved or you were damned. About 1,500 years ago the Irish developed a new and innately hopeful idea and took it with them as they moved as missionaries through western Europe. The idea, as Diarmaid MacCulloch puts it in his magisterial History of Christianity, was "not only that sin could be atoned for through penance but that it was possible to work out exact scales of what penance was appropriate for what sin: tariffs of forgiveness. They saw the spiritual life as a constant series of little setbacks, laboriously compensated for before the next little lapse".

Penance sounds rather grim, but this was in fact a great act of liberation. It created a ritual through which the slate of sin could be wiped clean and a life could begin afresh.

*Like most Irish people my age I grew up with this old ritual of individual confession. It was a three-act drama. The first act was to make a full confession – a complete and honest account of whatever it was you had done. If you held stuff back or wrapped it in evasions it was a bad confession – not only that you could not be forgiven but you had now added another sin to your pile. The second act was to "strive earnestly to be truly sorry" and adopt what we learned to call "**a firm purpose of amendment**". You sincerely regretted your sins and intended not to repeat them. The third act to accept the penance – usually a set number of prayers you had to say. You were meant to try to do this with good grace. It's a formula those old monks could now sell to troubled clients. Tell the truth, be genuinely sorry, accept your penance.*

And yet it is remarkable how almost everybody – including, of course, the Catholic Church itself – forgets to follow it.

Especially if they have power and money, they assume that they can get to the redemption bit without going through the other three stages. There are sins from which there is no return. There are also sins that double as crimes – in which case the rules of redemption are rather tougher.

But in ordinary matters of lust or greed or (in that other great Irish spiritual concept) "losing the run of yourself", where no irreparable harm has been done, most people are quite forgiving. Especially if the guilty party is familiar and well-liked, there's a natural desire to let bygones be bygones.

*Instead of playing into this desire, however, powerful people so often react to being caught out by following, not the well-mapped road to redemption, but **the winding path of denial**. The full confession is now **the self-serving and evasive narrative crafted by lawyers and spin doctors**. Its subtext is always the same: I didn't know anything.*

*Instead of sorrow there is anger. Or, more often, a weird fusion of the two: I'm terribly sorry if anything was done that should not have been done, but really it was those other b*****s who did it. "By me" becomes "to me".*

*The keynote is always **victimhood**. In place of acknowledgment and accountability there is the claim to be more sinned against than sinning. Whatever wrong I may have done is nothing compared to the wrong that is being done to me now.*

There is a "purpose of amendment", but it is decidedly not "firm". It's soft as mush: learnings have been taken. The "culture" (that invasive fungus that clings to the walls of institutions and makes everybody within them do bad things)

will change. And instead of the gracious acceptance of penance there is the strategic deployment of restitution. Gestures are made, but they are calculated and calibrated.

This stuff seldom works. It is ineffective because it does not satisfy the public's need to feel that the wrong that has been done is being taken seriously by the person who did it. **Those old Irish monks were doing their best to cut us poor humans some slack.** They thought we were basically good and that, if we strayed offside, we should be given a way back. But they also knew that if redemption was too cheap nobody would value it. **There was a difference between cutting some slack and severing the whole rope of responsibility.** Hence their "tariffs of forgiveness":

If you've done wrong and you want to find a way back you have to be willing to pay the tariff. You have to go through that three-stage process that we might call a tripartite agreement. Otherwise, instead of a ritual drama of redemption, we are simply left with the feeling that we are being played.

Masses and Services for the coming week

All Masses and Services from St Mary's are live-streamed

Saturday 22nd July 16 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Jose Gallo Santacruz, anniversary
Sunday 23rd July 16 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Miguel Valencia, deceased
Monday 24th July	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Sheila Mary Mander, anniversary
Tuesday 25th July St James, Apostle	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	Eucharistic Service Stefanija Burinskene, sick
Wednesday 26th July St Joachim & St Anne	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Jonabelle Marquez & family, thanksgiving
Thursday 27th July	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	Lillian Travers, sick Canon Brendan Alger, recently died
Friday 28th July	12.10 noon	St Mary's	James Higgins, recently died
Saturday 29th July Saints Mary, Martha & Lazarus	11.00 to 12.00 noon	St Mary's	Confessions and Exposition
17 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Catherine Fincher, anniversary
Sunday 30th July 17 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Monica Singleton, anniversary

- **School Tesco Tokens: Message from Donna Martin, headteacher of St Mary's School** - If you shop in Tesco, please collect a blue token for St Mary's School at the counter as you leave the store. This will help our school raise funds to develop the field for our children. Your help would be much appreciated. Thank you!
- The **Memory Support Group** will meet on **Tuesday 1st August** from 10.30am to 12 noon in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre. The leaders are delighted that Clare Kilgallon and members of the choir will provide the entertainment with music and song. Everyone welcome. Refreshments served. Please contact Josie 406063.
- **Advance Notice: St Anthony's SVP** will be holding an afternoon tea fundraiser on Saturday 16th September in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre. Full details will follow in the newsletter in coming weeks.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Anthony's £560; St Mary & St Joseph £1,006. Thank you for your generosity.

Archdiocese of Liverpool Lourdes Centenary Prayer (to be said at Masses each day during the Lourdes Pilgrimage)

Blessed Virgin Mary, at your school, Bernadette entered into a relationship with the Holy Trinity through the sign of the Cross. By teaching her prayer and penance for sinners, you conveyed to her the joy of salvation. You revealed to her the beauty of your pure heart when you said, "I am the Immaculate Conception". With Bernadette, we turn to you trusting completely in your maternal intercession. Accept the intentions of our hearts in this novena of prayer (especially for.....)

Our Lady of Lourdes, we pray to you especially for our own conversion and for all sinners. Watch over those who suffer in body or soul. In the hope that Life will triumph over death, from this moment and for ever more, we want to sing with you the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us. St Bernadette, pray for us.

- We wish all our young people especially those at St Mary's School a happy summer holiday. Thanks to all teachers and school staff.