

THE PHILADELPHIA ORDINARIATE POST

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL
AND THE BLESSED JOHN HENRY NEWMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Godly sorrow does not get a lot of attention these days. People, including Christians, understandably want to be happy, and joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Yet our Lord also tells us, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Even though we experience them as contradictory emotions, mourning and joy are not entirely incompatible. It would appear from Scripture that both are essential for Christians.

Where does godly sorrow come from? We know that we are supposed to be sorry for our sins. This is penitence. We are to be sorry not just because our sins wound and weaken us, not just because they undermine our self-esteem, not just because they keep us from being perfect as we would like to be. We are sorry because they nail Jesus to the Cross; they are offensive to our Beloved, and we care about offending Him. Sorrow for our sins brings us to kneel in the confessional and confess our sins. Sorrow is essential if we are to accept the forgiveness that God wants to give us. It forms humility in our hearts, and moves us to make reparation for our sins and amend our lives.

This sorrow, however, tends to be transitory: when we have received absolution in the confessional, we trust that God has forgiven us, and rejoice: and properly so. There is a sense in which a continuing sorrow for the sin would constitute doubt that we are really forgiven – a mistrust of God's mercy. Of course, it is usually not long before we have sinned anew, and a new occasion for penitence arises. But this suggests that while penitence is part of what Jesus has in mind in the Beatitude, there must be more to the “mourning” of which He speaks. He does not suggest that mourning should be confined to one season of the year – Lent. He speaks of a general and unlimited blessing in this sorrow, which brings unlimited comfort (from our Comforter, no doubt).

Compunction

The Ash Wednesday collect gives us the key, when it speaks not only of “worthily lamenting our sins,” but also of “acknowledging our wretchedness.” This is no mere rhetorical flourish. Consider what sin does to us. It always has an effect, and it leaves its scars even after we have been absolved and done penance. Every sin weakens us, just as temptation resisted strengthens us. When a young person confesses fornication in the confessional, he can be absolved and restored to communion with God, but he does not again become a virgin. The wound may heal, but there will always be a scar. Jesus' resurrected body bore the scars of the wounds of our sins, leaving us no doubt that this is so.

There is this second kind of sorrow, compunction: the sorrow that we have marred God's wonderful creation, and deformed ourselves. This is something we must live with daily, and should be a source of godly sorrow and humility. The problem is that we do not like to face the reality of what we have done. We prefer to forget our misdeeds of the past, and all the harm they have done to us and to others. Out of sight, out of mind. We may even think that we ought not to remember them, because our sins have been absolved. Generally that is the work of our pride, which wants to foster a self-image rather better than the reality. As the antidote to our pride, realism is essential, and realism about our wretchedness leads us to godly sorrow.



This was in the sermon on Ash Wednesday. It is as if God gives us a precious and beautiful vase when we are baptized. We are delighted and treasure it – until one day, in a fit of pique, we forget ourselves, and smash the vase. Soon we come to ourselves, and overwhelmed with what we have done, we collect all the little pieces in a box and bring them to our Lord. In His mercy, he glues the vase back together for us. But now the vase has all the little cracks; it is not what it once was. It is the sorrow for the cracks that should always abide with us. This requires that we remember what we have done – not being overwhelmed again with guilt, nor giving ourselves over to the “if only's” – if only I had done it differently An ungodly

sorrow is also possible – as when the memory triggers passionate self-recrimination, dejection, self-pity, despair. Rather we remember in order to be humbled by our past failings, and grateful for all God has done for us. It is always He who puts things back together after we have messed them up.

Thus we can begin to see the connection between sorrow and joy. True joy is the joy in what He has done rather in our own deeds, even the successes. We can only really have the joy when we are realistic about all He has done for us. And this is only possible when we are realistic about the bad things we have done and how little we have deserved His generous mercy. Robust and honest joy is the fruit of godly sorrow. Our tears of sorrow become mingled with tears of joy – sorrow at our misdeeds and their effects; joy that God has forgiven and repaired, and continues to love us.

Likewise “acknowledging our wretchedness” helps us to properly value His love for us. It teaches and reminds us how unlovely we have made ourselves, how unworthy we are of the love He pours out upon us. So long as we think we are more or less worthy of His love, we do not see it as it really is. We underestimate His love for us, since in truth He loves those who, by their sin, make themselves hard to love.

Lent

Lent continues (as no doubt you are well aware by your fasting) with Wednesday and Friday Stations of the Cross & Benediction. St Michael's joins with Holy Cross parish for the Friday night edition, at 7 at St Madeleine Sophie. The Newman Stations are on Wednesdays at 7 at Our Lady of the Assumption in Strafford on March 4th, 11th and 18th. (Since March 25th is the Annunciation, there will be no Stations that night, to allow for a 6 p.m. Mass at St Therese.) A Lenten supper precedes the Wednesday Stations at 6 in the Sacred Heart Chapel downstairs.

The Lenten Quiet Day will be on Saturday, March 14th, at St Thérèse. The day begins with Mass at 9:30, followed by coffee and a light breakfast (provided). Silence begins with the first address. Between the addresses (which I will be giving) there is opportunity for confession, and for quiet reflection. The day concludes with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 2. Please bring something for lunch. Even if you have a good daily Lenten discipline, I still encourage you to make this a priority. It is an excellent opportunity to take some time to focus on our Christian life, and to prepare for Holy Week and Easter. Since Lent is a time of spiritual combat, often more so than the rest of the year, taking time out like this enables God to arm us for the battle. You are welcome to bring guests.

Holy Week

This year, the services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday will be joint services for St Michael's and the Newman Fellowship, and will be at St Madeleine Sophie, 6440 Greene Street in Mount Airy (parking off Clivedon Street). The schedule for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday will be as usual, except that the St Michael's Mass on Easter will be at St Madeleine's rather than Holy Cross. Showing up at the right time and the right place is part of the test! I'm confident that you will pass. Note also that we will be keeping the Watch before the Altar of Repose (commemorating Jesus' agony on the Garden of Gethsemane) Thursday night and Friday morning. There will be a sign up sheet for those who can commit to an hour. We want to keep the Watch unbroken during the hours the church is open. Please consider offering an hour of your time if you possibly can. You will amply repaid spiritually for the effort. While Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil are not “of obligation,” all the faithful will want to be at the services if they possibly can. These commemorate the central facts of our redemption, and for the love of our Lord we will want to enter into them as deeply and whole-heartedly as we can.

2015 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

March 29th-April 5th

Palm Sunday: Palm Rite & Sung Mass, 9 a.m. *at Holy Cross*
Palm Rite & Sung Mass, 6 p.m. *at Our Lady of the Assumption*
Confessions, 8:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

Monday in Holy Week: Mass, 6 p.m. *at St Thérèse*

Tuesday in Holy Week: Mass, 6 p.m. *at St Thérèse*

Wednesday in Holy Week: Mass, 10 a.m. *at St Thérèse*
Confessions after the Mass each day

Maundy Thursday: Sung Mass, Procession to the Altar of Repose 7:30 p.m.
The Watch (until 11 p.m.)
at St Madeleine Sophie

Good Friday

The Watch (10-12)

Good Friday Liturgy, noon-3 *at St Madeleine Sophie*

Liturgy of the Word, Adoration of the Cross, Mass of the Presanctified, Preaching on the Seven Last Words
Confessions after the service

Holy Saturday

Vigil & First Mass of Easter, 8:30 p.m. *at St Madeleine Sophie*
Confessions 8 p.m.

Easter Day

Sung Mass, 9 a.m. *at St Madeleine Sophie*
Sung Mass, 6 p.m. *at Our Lady of the Assumption*
Confessions, 8:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

One of the adjustments which Anglicans have to make when coming into the full communion of the Catholic Church is that there actually are definite obligations in being a Catholic. As Anglicans, we had suggestions (about fasting, confession, Communion, etc.), often very good suggestions! The Catholic Church gives us some definite requirements. These are generally quite modest: since they are required of all, they are set to accommodate the weakest. Still, we need to understand that we are bound by them, and in entering the Catholic Church, we have engaged to obey them. The five Precepts of the Church are thus authoritative for us. As I hope you remember from your catechesis, these include participating in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, receiving Communion at least once a year at Easter, making a sacramental confession at least once a year and whenever we are aware of mortal sin, observing the Church's discipline of fasting, and giving to the support of the Church (tithing). Sunday Mass, in other words, is not just a good thing to do when it is convenient. It is an obligation. Of course, when travel is perilous, there is no sin involved in staying home. But in the larger sense, we need to accept that we are under authority. Our obedience to the Church is part of the obedience to God, without which we will not find a place in heaven. It prepares us for conforming our wills to Him "whose service is perfect freedom."

The Ordinary's Visit

Our Ordinary, Monsignor Jeffrey Steenson, will be visiting us on Passion Sunday, March 22nd. He will be visiting St Michael's in the morning and the Newman Community in the evening, at our usual service times. In addition to preaching, he will be spending time with each congregation after the Masses. This is his opportunity to see how we are doing and offer encouragement, and to share with us developments in the Ordinariate and the wider church. I hope you will all make every effort to be there – and that you will join me in praying that we have no ice or snow that Sunday as we've had so often recently. As always, guests are welcome, and if there are those you would like to introduce to the Ordinariate, consider whether this would be a good occasion to invite them.

St Michael's Youth Group

The Youth Group at St Michael's got off to a good start in February, with some 22 high school age youth participating. We met for supper and instruction and discussion at the rectory and then participated at Stations of the Cross (it was the first Friday in Lent). The kids come from a number of different schools as



well as home-schooling families. They were engaged in the discussions, and had good questions. I think it is going to be a great group to work with. We are planning to continue at 5:30 on the second and fourth Fridays of the month. In March, this will be the same pattern (supper, discussion, Stations). From April on, the Stations will not be a part of the program, but we will have some appropriate devotions. Others are welcome, and if you know teenagers whom you think might be interested, let me know and I'll invite them. I am very grateful to Renee McCullough and Claire

Thomas for their initiative, and their willingness to look after all the administrative details involved in this work, and to Matt Hummell for helping out.

Patrick Burke, a Newman parishioner and retired Temple professor, is offering a course starting this month (Thursday nights) through the Wynnewood Institute on The Concept of Justice: Justice and Social Justice. I commend it to you. For details email wynnewood@wynnewood.org.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley