

## **“Sacrament of Reconciliation 1” - 2nd Lent (A)**

This Lent, so far, I have been greatly blessed and encouraged by the example of the students at the Chaplaincy at the university. They have been coming to weekday Mass in great numbers; last night over thirty of them prayed the Stations of the Cross through the squares of the campus; and on Ash Wednesday, having said that I would be available in my office from 10:30 in the morning to six in the evening, I was literally kept busy the whole day hearing confessions and seeing people who wish to become Catholic. I share this with you because it is a source of hope for all of us.

Peter’s reaction to seeing Moses and Elijah with Jesus is perfectly understandable; he tries to bring some order and everydayness to a way out experience. In times of crisis we make cups of tea; Peter offers to construct three tents. However unattractive camping is to me, his offer makes sense. But then he, with James and John, hears the voice of the Father and he falls to the ground. Peter has done this before: after a night of fishing with no success, Jesus directed Peter to lower his nets and he brought in a great catch. Peter’s reaction was to fall to his knees and cry, ‘Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man’ (Luke 5:8). Witnessing the all-powerful goodness of God, Peter is overwhelmed by his own sinfulness.

It might surprise you to know this but Peter’s reaction is a not uncommon experience for priests during Confessions. We all go to Confession convicted by our need for God’s forgiveness but what the priest sees is a wonderful humility and a desire to do better and, in the light of the other person’s goodness, he becomes aware of his own sinfulness - paradoxical and true.

In the world of heresies, Britain’s one claim to fame is Pelagianism. Named after Pelagius, a Brit from the fourth century, Pelagianism is the belief that basically we can save ourselves: try to live a good life and that is enough. Probably many of us today think a bit like that. The truth, however, is that I can only be saved by what Jesus did on the cross. As St Paul said in today’s reading from his Second Letter to Timothy: ‘the power of God has saved us and called us to be holy - not because of anything we ourselves have done but for his own purpose and by his own grace.’ I am saved because of what Jesus has done and I am only able to do anything of lasting good because again Jesus helps me with his grace.

Peter knew that; that is why he was overwhelmed by the voice of the Father. The students know that; that is why they came to confession. We are called to be holy, to become what God made us to be but we cannot do that by own efforts. We need God’s grace - his help.

So an essential part of Lent is to awaken God’s goodness, go to Confession and receive His grace because Confession is not about making us feel bad but about helping us to become good. This Lent, I am going to confession once a week. This not because I am over-scrupulous - I am not. It’s because I need to grow in my life with God and want to grow. Confession is the Mountain of the Transfiguration where I hear the Father’s voice, acknowledge my sinfulness and then am helped to share in the glory of His Son. This Lent may we all be transfigured.