



The Priesthood of Jesus Christ: Encountering Christ in the Confessional

The human soul longs, craves for, blessing and forgiveness.

The human heart longs to experience itself as dwelling in God's favour, being the recipient of the gift of His graces, but how often do we actually really reflect upon the beauty, the power, the mercy made manifest, freely offered to each and every one of us, in the Sacrament of Penance?

How often do we reflect upon, and with genuine with gratitude, those priests who have laid down their lives to be ministers of His Word and His Sacraments?

Prisoners of Love

Compassion, sympathy and pity ... these come naturally to us for those held in captivity, imprisoned through no fault of their own, and even for those who have perpetrated crimes and live out their limited existence in our prisons and state penitentiaries — but do we ever think of those who are prisoners of love? — those who spend much of their lives within the close confines of the Confessional listening to the penitent hearts of humanity?

Throughout the whole Catholic world, especially in the great centres of pilgrimage, Lourdes, Fatima, Guadeloupe, Knock, Rome, Assisi, San Giovanni Rotundo, and in many, many other places, priests serve the faithful with unstinting generosity within the Confessional.

The self-giving of a priest in the Confessional is a divine gift beyond measure, the holy, wise, and loving counsel given ... these are the listening ears of Christ, the priest's lips are the dispensers of the very mercy of God, and who among us has not known healing and received the gift of new life through the ministry of a priest?

We will never know with what love the priest has taken our burdens upon himself in prayer, often with penance and mortification, often with tears before God.

Think of the great Cure of Ars, St. Jeanne Vianney, who performed the most extraordinary penances to gain merits, or as a gift of reparation to the Lord, for the sins of his penitents. Hundreds were drawn to seek his counsel; through his aid, his love, his wisdom, and holy encouragement they perceived rightly that he could and would direct their feet on the path back to God.

"The Priest continues the work of redemption on earth ... If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die, not of fright, but of love ... The Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus". (Cure of Ars)

St. Padre Pio, the Friar of San Giovanni Rotundo, the Stigmatic and Priest, is famous for the miracles of healing that have been performed through his intercession; but far more impressive are the long hours he sat in the Confessional, consoling, correcting and assisting sinners.

"He united himself to Christ in expiation for the sins of man. If there were many conversions through him, many astounding, I believe that this was principally due to his suffering, a message of devotion, of fidelity and of love for the Pope and the Church". (Fr General of the Order)

And what of the much loved "hero of the confessional" St. Leopold Mandic, the humble Capuchin Friar, who spent the greater part of his priestly life in the Confessional. He himself was crippled with arthritis, and at a mere 4 feet 10 inches tall, a small man at best – with a great heart for God and for souls. Thousands benefited from his ministry of self-sacrifice.

"When I say Mass, my thoughts are all for who have consulted me. At the culmination of the Sacred Mysteries I fold them all in my heart and I know the prayers will be answered because what I ask for is nothing compared to what I offer". (St. Leopold Mandic).

The very fact that thousands and thousands have sought to be reconciled to God through the ministry of a priest in the Confessionals of our great Churches shows how much the human heart and soul longs to be at peace and in communion with its God.

Our God is so rich in mercy and forgiveness! In abundance unto overflowing! Let us take time to read the lives of our Saints, our priests and sing with heartfelt gratitude for all they have done for the Church – which is to say, for us. For you. For me.

Who can ever know or fathom the love which passes through the heart of a priest; who can ever possibly begin to value his holy zeal to win and save souls for the Kingdom.

The heart of a priest is the heart of Christ

Pray and give thanks for our priests, especially for those who have assisted you through life, and brought you life, in Christ — even Jesus Christ Himself at the Altar, in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass — His very Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist ... by whose hands, whose words, Christ becomes really and truly present to us!

Peace through the Sacrament of Penance — Life itself through the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!

Give thanks to God for Priests among men who bring us to God in the Confessional ... and bring God to us in the Mass!

A Poor Clare Colettine Nun



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