

ARTICLE 76

Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

Marriage a gift from God

First Published in the '*Catholic Voice*', Ireland, December 2016

John Lacken – john@truedevotions.ie



Marriage! Advent Preparation

The Season of Advent

As we enter the season of Advent, where we look forward not only to the coming of Christ's birthday, but also to His second coming, we are reminded that this is a time of preparation. Primarily, preparation of our souls so that we are ready to meet Christ if he should choose to come at this time and so that we are in a state of perpetual readiness for our own death. I tell my children that it doesn't matter how they die, or when they die, or where they die, or what they die of. The only thing that matters is that they are in a state of grace when that moment arrives as it inevitably will for all of us. Those who are in a state of grace at the moment of their death will go to Heaven even if they are detained in purgatory for a short or long time. Those who die in a state of mortal sin, that is without sanctifying grace, will go to Hell for all eternity.

The Effects of Original Sin remain

We were born in a state of original sin which was cleansed at our baptism. Nevertheless, the effects of original sin remain in us and we have an inclination towards sinful and selfish habits. St Paul speaks of the war between the flesh and the spirit. The sacrament of confession is the remedy for the sins committed after our baptism and it has become somewhat of a maligned sacrament whose importance no longer seems to be emphasised on account of the fact that the serious nature of all sin tends to be disregarded. Often times even the priest at Mass will ask for forgiveness for our 'faults and failings' rather than asking for forgiveness for our sins.

The Importance of Confession

We have just finished the Jubilee Year of Mercy and at the end of the year Pope Francis in his apostolic letter '*Misericordia et misera*' said "I grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion" The sin of abortion used to be what was called a 'reserved' sin. Reserved, in that absolution could only be granted by a bishop or by a priest who had specifically been delegated that power by his bishop. This is no longer the case.

Outreach to those affected by Abortion

In doing this Pope Francis is reaching out to those who have had a direct involvement in the grave sin of abortion to encourage them to seek God's forgiveness in confession. He is not in any way lessening the grave nature of the sin of abortion and to make this clear he also says, "I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father."

As we are now in the season of Advent, it is no harm to have a look at Church teaching on the Sacrament of Confession. Perhaps we can also keep in mind another topic I have addressed in some detail in these articles. That is the sin of immodesty. At a time when many like to celebrate Christmas by attending a Christmas party, it is sad to note that many of the ladies who attend these parties will be dressed immodestly. Many magazines will advertise immodest party clothing for women and many will place themselves in an occasion of sin at a time when they should be purifying their lives in preparation for the coming of our saviour Jesus Christ.

A Sacrament has *Form and Matter*

The Church teaches us that for a sacrament to be valid it must have the correct form and the correct matter. The form of the sacrament of confession consists of the words of absolution spoken by the priest "through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The matter of the sacrament of confession consists of the confessed sins of the penitent and the penitent's contrition for those sins.

Making a Good Confession

According to the catechism of Pope St Pius X, to make a good confession five things are necessary: (1) Examination of Conscience; (2) Sorrow for having offended God; (3) A resolution of sinning no more; (4) Confession of our sins; (5) Satisfaction or penance.

Recently, whilst examining one of my children on their Catechism lessons, I came across the question "what are the nine ways of co-operating in the sins of another" I have to admit that I did not know the answer to this question myself. When I read the answer, fully realising that it is a sin to co-operate in the sins of another, I was taken aback at my lack of knowledge and also at how little regard I had paid to this aspect of my conscience in the past.

The Nine Ways of Co-Operating in the Sins of Another

The nine ways of co-operating in the sins of another are as follows. We co-operate in the sins of another; By Counsel; By Command; By Consent; By Concealment; By Defence of Evil Done; By Partaking; By Provocation; By Praise; By Silence.

I was particularly struck by the fact that we co-operate in the sins of another by our consent and by our silence. Sometimes our silence implies consent, as in when we refuse to correct another whom we know to be sinning. In this regard I mention again the sin of immodesty and the great problem of those who witness immodest dress but remain silent for fear of causing offence or for fear of what will be said. I have spoken before of the negative reaction my wife and I have received when we have corrected someone who was dressed immodestly, particularly when they were in the presence of our young boys.

Mini Skirts are Immodest

I have also noticed a recent phenomenon amongst some young women and girls whereby they know that wearing a mini skirt is immodest, but they think that if they wear thick stockings, leggings or trousers with the mini skirt that this then makes it modest. Mini skirts are not a form of modest dress regardless of what they are worn with because they direct attention, particularly of young men, to the woman's legs and can thereby become an occasion of sin.

I think that this can be better understood if these young girls and women were to ask themselves the question "would our Lady dress like this" In all of her apparitions throughout the world, Our Lady has always appeared wearing a long dress. If it is good enough for Our Lady then surely it must be good enough for all women and girls since Our Lady has given this mode of dress as an example.

Jacinta Marto on Immodesty

Jacinta Marto, one of the seers of Fatima was told by our Lady that "the sins which bring most souls to hell are the sins of the flesh. Certain fashions are going to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much... the Church has no fashions; Our Lord is always the same..."

A dress designer, when he designs clothes for a woman has a particular view of women which is manifest in his designs. If we contrast modern immodest clothing for women with what Our Lady has presented us with, it seems clear that many modern dress designs portray women as objects to be desired for their bodies. Our Lady, by the way she dresses, encourages women to present themselves as daughters of a King and not just any King, but as daughters of the King of Heaven clothed with

the dignity and purity of the children of God.

“My soul glorifies the Lord”

Remember Our Lady's words in the Magnificat “My soul glorifies the Lord”. Our Lady does not dress the way she does in order to attract attention to herself, she seeks to direct attention to her son Jesus Christ and she shows women how they should dress if they would do likewise.

So in this time of advent let us prepare well by making a good examination of our consciences, particularly looking at how we may have co-operated in the sins of others, and let us wash ourselves clean in the beautiful sacrament of confession so that when Jesus Christ calls, we will be ready to stand in His presence.

© John Lacken 2016

These articles are free to download, to print and to distribute provided that authorship is acknowledged and contact details for the author are provided as follows.

Author: John Lacken
Founder: Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family
E-Mail: john@truedevotions.ie
Website: www.truedevotions.ie