

Lenten Penance Service sermon:

In 1976 a song written by the talented duo, Elton John and Bernie Taupin, "Sorry seems to be the Hardest word", reached the top of the Billboard charts in short time.. It tells the story of a fractured relationship and the subsequent pain caused by it.

In view of the crisis facing our post Christian culture, the song's title also speaks of a plague afflicting the Western World in general—an unwillingness to acknowledge personal responsibility for our moral failures, and our sins of commission and omission. In our secular culture, truth is subjective and relative.. The human being is considered to be autonomous and is accountable to no one but himself.. What is the purpose of seeking forgiveness in a world that has no need of it? The word "sin" is conspicuously missing from our conversations today. Indeed, the mere mention of sin is likely to make those in our company angry. We have no right to judge is the refrain we often hear. Regrettably, there is an adamant refusal to repent.

Nowadays, it is apparent that to tell someone you are sorry is a meaningless gesture. It can be a sign of weakness, and not strength. One runs the risk of losing his self-esteem and the respect of others.

Only recently the son of the Baptist preacher, Billy Graham, made a public appeal to misguided and unhappy Americans. Franklin Graham, also a Baptist minister, implored them to turn to Christ. Once they turn to the Lord, all that Jesus demands of them is that "they need to speak to God and tell Him that they are sorry for all their past sins".

But in these confusing times in which few can distinguish between right and wrong, vice and virtue and good and evil what sins, if any, would be confessed? How much of our wrongdoing would be concealed?

Those who have gathered here tonight for our Lenten Penance service wish to be reconciled to God. You seek God's mercy. By showing humility you are assured of forgiveness. All that is needed are two words: "I'm sorry". The Lord rejects sin, but not forever. He is open to repairing the damage of our evil acts.

Confessing our sins to a priest, who serves as an instrument of God's healing, can restore peace to our troubled souls. Indeed at the end of the encounter the priest says to the penitent, "Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven. God's mercy endures forever".