



# The Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament

Patrons: *The Rt. Hon. The Lord Alton of Liverpool, KCSG, KCMCO & The Rt. Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP*

Newsletter 33 | Summer 2020

*Dear Members,*

Life is slowly returning to some semblance of normality. We still have to wear face masks in church, socially distance and take extra precautions with regards to hygiene, but I'm sure you will all agree that there is a much-welcome return to some of the life we were familiar with before lockdown.

We are entering September, which is dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. As Saint Bernard declares, the Mother of Christ entered into the Passion of her Son through her compassion. At the foot of the Cross, the prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled: her mother's heart is pierced through by the torment inflicted on the Innocent One born of her flesh. Just as Jesus cried, so too Mary certainly cried over the tortured body of her Son.



Her self-restraint, however, prevents us from plumbing the depths of her grief; the full extent of her suffering is merely suggested by the traditional symbol of the seven swords. As in the case of her Son Jesus, one might say that she too was led to perfection through this suffering, so as to make her capable of receiving the new spiritual mission that her Son entrusts to her immediately before "giving up his spirit": that of becoming the Mother of Christ in his members. In that hour, through the figure of the beloved disciple, Jesus presents each of his disciples to his Mother when he says to her: Behold your Son. Let us contemplate these Sorrows during this month, and let us unite the prayers of our hearts as we say the Rosary to the Most Sorrowful Heart of Our Blessed Mother.

I am pleased to announce that the first Sodality Mass since lockdown will be celebrated on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 6:30pm**, and our guest preacher will be Fr Timothy Finnigan, who many of you may know from his blog *The Hermeneutic of Continuity*. For those of you who can't be in person, you can join us online at [maidenlane.org.uk/live](http://maidenlane.org.uk/live) where the Mass will be live-streamed. I look forward to seeing you there!

With prayers from the Shrine,

Fr Alan Robinson  
*Sodality Chaplain*

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# JULY HOMILY: Fr Alan Robinson

*Due to the lockdown restrictions, the July Sodality Mass was not able to go ahead as usual. Public worship only resumed a few days later. Therefore a Holy Hour was live streamed on the parish website at [maidenlane.org.uk/live](http://maidenlane.org.uk/live) and the Sodality Facebook page. Fr Robinson preached the following homily.*

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Hopefully, if things continue to progress well with regard to the COVID-19 virus, the First Thursday of September will see us back to “normal” – with a celebration of Mass, Exposition and Benediction for the Members of the Sodality, and with a guest preacher here at the Shrine. But tonight, we have a Holy Hour, with a Homily. And I think the subject is very important for us all.

Over the last few months, many people have found it terribly difficult being away from **two** Sacraments: The Mass and Confession. That’s because they are at the very heart of our Catholic lives. When the lockdown was eased in England and people could go out for a walk – I suggested that, at a distance, it was perfectly possible to come to the Shrine for Confession, as long as no one was making a journey which was out of their way. And I’m delighted that many people did that very thing – making their Confession in the street – at the prescribed distance of 2 metres. And that has continued right up until today. In fact, I’ve found it difficult to understand why so many people have told me that it has been impossible to get to

Confession in their own parish. Well, who knows why...

But now we’ve got to a point where it would be a very good thing to go to Confession – as many of the churches are re-opening on Saturday, and there is the real possibility of coming to the altar again. I know you’ve been able to make a Perfect Act of Contrition when in a State of Sin during lockdown... but that’s only part of the solution: the other bit necessitates getting to Confession as soon as reasonably possible. So, do you believe that now you can, you are ready and prepared to receive Holy Communion again? Or do you need to fulfil the other half of your Act of Contrition “bargain” before you do so. Or are you starting from scratch, and need to receive God’s mercy in the Confessional?

Being deprived of receiving Holy Communion for so long, except making a Spiritual Communion. Being away from the Confessional, and only being able to resolve things via a Perfect Act of Contrition. This has been a very different manner in which to live our lives of faith – and many of you feel deprived. You may

also have things which need sorting out – to enable you to get back on track.

Our Gospel at Mass this morning was about the paralytic man who was carried on his bed by his friends, so that he could see Jesus. And the version in St Mark's Gospel reminds us of how this man's friends made a big effort of taking away the tiles from the roof and lowering him down, to rest before Jesus, who said to him, "Your sins are forgiven." The image of this man is of someone overburdened and weighed down by sin – sin that only Jesus can remove and thereby restore him to health; assisted by the man's friends who were full of faith, and part of the cure.

When we come to Confession, it's often to get things sorted out for the immediate. We might say:

- it's to make us well again
- to restore our relationship with God, which has been fractured (Venial Sin) or completely broken (Mortal Sin)
- to cleanse the sin from our hearts / souls so that we can make a fresh start

And, of course, all of those things are right and good to say. When we sit down and examine our conscience – and discover things are not quite as they should be – we come to the confessional to confess our sin, admitting our fault, receiving God's Absolution - and then go away with a firm purpose of amendment, i.e. that we will leave the confessional with the intention of changing our lives and sinning no more. And what usually happens? The next time we confess the same things – and it happens time and time again, rather like a chronic illness. Why is that? Is it worth continuing if there is no change? Is it just a waste of time?

The first thing to say is NO – it is not a waste of time. God only knows what we

would be like if we didn't come to Confession regularly. The devil would love it if we decided to abandon this Sacrament – because he could be certain that we would get further and further away from God and His Merciful love for us – and end up not being ready for heaven when death comes. So – keep at it, whatever you do.

Many of us find ourselves in the same boat – most people find they bring the same sins over and over again – the same sickness. Habitual sin is very difficult to break – because we have got used to it; we have made it a friend in our lives. Or we may be in a situation which is not right

*But in the long term, we need to be looking beyond this, looking for the cure which goes to the root of the problem*

(and we know it's not right), but we don't know what to do about it – we're scared – or perhaps we don't want to let go, although we know it's wrong! Sometimes we just deal with it by **not** dealing with it – we tuck it away somewhere within ourselves and pretend all is well – and it just makes us unwell. Life is very complicated – usually made so by ourselves.

If the doctor treated us like this – just kept putting a sticky plaster on the problems but did nothing else – we wouldn't be happy, would we? If there were a problem we had to keep bringing to him over and over, we'd want an answer: "What IS wrong with me? What can you do about it? I don't want to keep living with this, it's making me sick and anxious and affecting my whole wellbeing." Is that how we think about the sin in our lives? We'd really like a result, like we see in that Gospel today.

Part of our problem is the manner in which we approach our sins. What we normally want is a quick fix – the plaster or pill that makes things feel better for now – a quick Confession. And that's good. But in the long term, we need to be looking



beyond this, looking for the cure which goes to the root of the problem – and it's the same one for everyone: **conversion of heart**.

When we examine our Conscience and see the same things popping up every time –we need to ask that difficult but unavoidable question: *Why* do I keep committing this sin?

Acknowledging the sin and confessing it is good; the only way forward is to turn to Jesus and be repentant. Discovering *why* we sin and trying to change the motivation is not so easy – but necessary. You'll remember that woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. Jesus forgives her, for she is repentant – but tells her to sin no more. How is she going to do this? By being motivated to make the change and live in a different way. And her motivation? Her personal encounter with Jesus. For us too, a personal encounter with the Lord is the only motivation that is going to convert our heart and move us in the right direction. To look upon His face – to be truly sorry – and to have the desire to be faithful to Him in all things.

Where does this personal encounter occur? **In the Mass and Confession above all.** Coming to those Sacraments frequently, and being well prepared – *expecting* to have a personal encounter with God Himself. A Catholic life fully integrated with Jesus is impossible without these two sacraments in our lives.

Praying the Rosary – rather than just rattling it off: entering into the Mysteries and letting them touch our lives as they remind us of all that the Lord has gone through for us. And that time of personal prayer each day – especially before the Blessed Sacrament – offering ourselves to Jesus, talking with Him and

trying to listen as He speak to us in the silence of our hearts. It is these things above all that are going to enable this personal and life-changing encounter.

It's good to remind ourselves of the Life to which we have been called – by reflecting on our Baptism Promises – thanking God for that moment we became His Children and Brothers and Sisters of the Lord: print them out and put them in your Prayer Book:

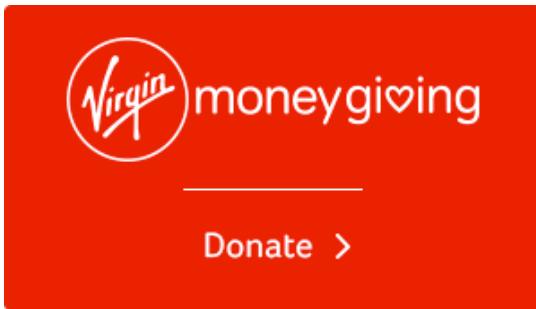
- Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?
- Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?
- Do you renounce Satan, the author and prince of sin?
- Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

The answer to each of these questions is a personal one – I DO! This is the life of the Church – this is the life to which we have been called – a life to be lived in union with Jesus, every moment of every day.

May God give us His Grace, through the Sacraments of the Church, to heal our sins, to bring about a Conversion of Heart in each one of us, so that we may live our lives for Him in all things. ✠



# PLEASE HELP KEEP US GOING



Everyone is struggling with the Coronavirus closures and suspensions. This is a crisis that will affect many lives for many months to come.

Here at the Shrine, Mass carries on. Although the doors are now open, and public worship has resumed, we still do not have as many visitors coming through our doors as we did before

lockdown. There are no tourists coming to the theatres, which remain closed, and several restaurants in the parish are yet to reopen.

All the Masses celebrated here are being live-streamed on [maidenlane.org.uk/live](https://maidenlane.org.uk/live). Please keep an eye on our website at [maidenlane.org.uk](https://maidenlane.org.uk) for updates – but know that you can stay engaged with the life of the Shrine, even from afar.

Unlike many parishes, we have no investments, no properties from which we can collect rent and little cash in the bank. The Shrine is funded almost entirely on what people put in the collection each week. With the doors of the church closed and with Covent Garden feeling rather like a ghost town, we will have no income until life gets back to normal.

If you are able to help us, please visit our website at [maidenlane.org.uk/support](https://maidenlane.org.uk/support)  
There you can:

- request Masses for a particular intention
- have the lamps burning before the Tabernacle offered for a particular intention
- make a direct one-off or regular donation.

If you can, please Gift Aid your donation by simply ticking the relevant box during the payment process. This allows us to claim 25% of your donation from the Government.

You could also invite a friend to join the Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament, or sign them up as a member by way of a birthday or lockdown gift.

And if you aren't able to help us financially – please keep praying for us. Perhaps you could offer a decade (or more) of your rosary for the work of the Shrine, or in reparation for sins against the Blessed Sacrament? Please keep praying for other members of the Sodality.

Thank you for whatever support you can give us over the coming weeks. We are so incredibly appreciative. Please be assured of our continued prayers for you all!

# POPE JOHN PAUL I

## *The Lamp of Faith*

*Pope John Paul I was born Albino Luciani in northern Italy in 1912. He was ordained in 1935 and was consecrated Bishop in 1958. He served as Bishop of Vittorio Veneto, before being appointed Patriarch of Venice in 1969. Following the death of Pope Saint Paul VI in 1978, he was elected Supreme Pontiff. However, he reigned for only 33 days, and died suddenly on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1978.*



*In that short time, he held four General Audiences, which were focused on the seven "Lamps of Sanctification" of Pope John XXIII. The following text is Pope John Paul I's reflection on the lamp of faith.*

✠ Pope John XXIII, in a note of his, which was also published, said: "This time I gave the retreat on the Seven Lamps of Sanctification". Seven virtues, he meant, that is, faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance. Who knows if the Holy Spirit will help the poor Pope today to illustrate at least one or these lamps, the first one, faith.

Here in Rome there was a poet, Trilussa, who also tried to speak of faith. In a certain poem of his, he said: "That little old blind woman, whom I met / the evening I lost my way in the middle of the wood, / said to me: —If you don't know the way / I'll accompany you, for I know it / If you have the strength to follow me / from time to time I'll call to you, right to the bottom there, where there is a cypress, / right to the top there, where there is a cross. I answered: that may be ... but I find it strange / that I can be guided by some one sightless ... / The blind woman, then,

took my hand / and sighed: Come on. —It was faith." As a poem, it is delightful; as theology, defective.

It is defective because when it is a question of faith, the great stage manager is God. Because Jesus said: "No one comes to me unless my Father draws him". St Paul did not have faith, in fact he was persecuting the faithful. God waits for him on the way to Damascus:

"Paul", he says to him, "don't take it into your head to rear up, to kick, like a restive horse. I am that Jesus whom you are persecuting. I need you. You must change!" Paul surrendered; he changed, leading a completely different life. Some years afterwards, he will write to the Philippians: "that time, on the way to Damascus, God seized me; since then I have done nothing but run after him, to see if I, too, am able to seize him, imitating him, loving him more and more."

That is what faith is: to surrender to God, but transforming one's life. A thing that is not always easy! Augustine has told of the journey of his faith; especially in the last few weeks it was terrible; reading, one feels his soul almost shudder and writhe in interior conflicts. On the one hand, God calls him and insists; on the other hand, his old habits, "old friends", he writes, ... ; "and they pulled me gently by my mantle of flesh and they said to me: 'Augustine, what! You are abandoning us? Look out, you won't be able to do this any more, you won't be able ever again to do that other.'" A hard thing! "I felt", he says, "like one who is in bed, in the morning. He is told: 'Out,

Augustine, get up! Finally the Lord gave me a sharp tug, and I came out. You see, one mustn't say: 'Yes, but; yes, but later'. One must say: 'Yes, Lord! At once!' This is faith. To respond to the Lord generously. But who says this 'yes'? He who is humble and trusts God completely! "

My mother used to tell me when I was a boy: "When you were little, you were very ill. I had to take you from one doctor to another and watch over you whole nights; do you believe me?" How could I have said: "I don't believe you, Mamma"? "Of course I believe, I believe what you tell me, but I believe especially in you."

And so it is in faith. It is not just a question of believing in the things that God revealed, but in him who deserves our faith, who has loved us so much and done so much for our sake.

It is also difficult to accept some truths, because the truths of faith are of two kinds; some pleasant, others unpalatable to our spirit. For example, it is pleasant to hear that God has so much tenderness for us, even more tenderness than a mother has for her children, as Isaiah says. How pleasant and congenial it is! There was a great French bishop, Dupanloup, who used to say to the rectors of seminaries: "with the future priests, be fathers, be mothers". It is agreeable. Other truths, on the contrary, are hard to accept. God must punish, if I resist. He runs after me, he begs me to repent and I say: "No!" I almost force him to punish me. This is not agreeable. But it is a truth of faith. And there is a last difficulty, the Church. St Paul asked: "Who are you, Lord?" —"I am that Jesus whom you are persecuting". A light, a flash, crossed his mind. I do not persecute Jesus, I don't even know him: I persecute the Christians. It is clear that Jesus and the Christians, Jesus and the

Church are the same thing: indissoluble, inseparable.

Read St Paul: "*Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*". Christ and the Church are only one thing. Christ is the Head, we, the Church, are his limbs. It is not possible to have faith and to say, "I believe in Jesus, I accept Jesus but I do not accept the Church." We must accept the Church, as she is. And what is this Church like? Pope John called her "*Mater et Magistra*". Teacher also. St Paul said: "Let everyone accept us as Christ's aids and stewards and dispensers of his mysteries."

When the poor Pope, when the bishops, the priests, propose the doctrine, they are merely helping Christ. It is not our doctrine, it is Christ's; we must just guard it and present it. I was present when Pope

John opened the Council on 11 October 1962. At a certain point he said: "We hope that with the Council the Church will take a leap forward." We all hoped so; but a leap forward, on what way? He told us at once: on certain and immutable truths. It never even occurred to Pope John that the truths could go forward, and then, gradually, change. Those are the truths: we must walk along the way of these truths, understanding them more and more, bringing ourselves up-to-date, proposing them in a form suited to the new times. Pope Paul too had the same thought. The first thing I did, as soon as I was made Pope, was to enter the private Chapel of the Pontifical Household. Right at the back Pope Paul had two mosaics made: St Peter and St Paul: St Peter dying, St Paul dying. But under St Peter: are the words of Jesus: "I will pray for you, Peter, that your faith may never fail." Under St Paul, on whom the sword falls: "I have run my race, I have kept the faith." You know that in his last address on 29 June, Paul VI said: "After

*The Church is also a mother. If she continues Christ, and Christ is good, the Church too must be good; good to everyone.*



fifteen years of pontificate, I can thank the Lord that I have defended the faith, that I have kept the faith".

The Church is also a mother. If she continues Christ, and Christ is good, the Church too must be good; good to everyone. But if by chance there should sometimes be bad people in the Church? We have our mother. If mother is sick, if my mother by chance should become lame, I love her even more. It is the same, in the Church. If there are, and there are, defects and shortcomings, our affection for the Church must never fail. Yesterday, and I conclude, I was sent the issue of "Città Nuova". I saw that they have reported, recording it, a very short address of mine, with an episode. A certain British preacher MacNabb, speaking in Hyde Park, had spoken of the Church. When he finished, someone asked to speak and said: "Yours are fine words. But I know some Catholic priests who did not stay with the poor and became rich. I know also Catholic husbands who have betrayed their wives. I do not like this Church made of sinners."

The Father said: "There's something in what you say. But may I make an objection?" — "Let's hear it."—He says: "Excuse me, but am I mistaken or is the collar of your shirt a little greasy?" —He says: "Yes, it is, I admit." —"But is it greasy because you haven't used soap, or because you used soap but it was no use?" "No", he says, I haven't used soap."

You see. The Catholic Church too has extraordinary soap: the gospel, the sacraments, prayer. The gospel read and lived; the sacraments celebrated in the right way; prayer well used, would be a marvellous soap, capable of making us all saints. We are not all saints, because we have not used this soap enough. Let us try to meet the hopes of the Popes who held and applied the Council, Pope John, Pope Paul. Let us try to improve the Church, by becoming better ourselves. Each of us and the whole Church could recite the prayer I am accustomed to recite: "Lord, take me as I am, with my defects, with my shortcomings, but make me become as you want me to be." ✠



# The Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament

*A Confraternity dedicated to Jesus Christ, Truly Present  
in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*



**MONTHLY MASS, WITH A GUEST PREACHER,  
FOLLOWED BY ADORATION AND BENEDICTION**  
*First Thursday of the month, 6:30pm*

**Corpus Christi, Maiden Lane, Covent Garden**  
*The Diocesan Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament*

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- ✘ **3<sup>rd</sup> September** Fr Timothy Finigan, *Priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark*
  - ✘ **1<sup>st</sup> October** Fr Thomas Skeats, OP, *University Chaplain of King's College*
  - ✘ **5<sup>th</sup> November** Fr Benedict Kiely, *Founder of Nasarean.org*
  - ✘ **3<sup>rd</sup> December** Fr Dominic Robinson, SJ, *Parish Priest of Farm Street*

**Join the live stream at  
[maidenlane.org.uk/live](http://maidenlane.org.uk/live)**

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Masses offered for the intentions of Members of the Sodality.  
Members receive a monthly newsletter and a Sodality pin badge.  
Find out more and join today: [www.sodality.co.uk](http://www.sodality.co.uk)

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