

CATHOLIC WITNESS – FRIDAY PENANCE

The Visit of Pope Benedict XVI evoked for many people the spiritual reality of life and rekindled hope and faith: hope in the goodness that is within people and in our society, and faith in God.

Even if it is not easily articulated, a spiritual yearning is to be found within most people. This yearning is found also among Catholics who have lost touch with their faith or whose faith was never deeply rooted in a personal relationship with Christ. Wishing to respond to this yearning but perhaps lacking in confidence in talking about their own spiritual life, many Catholics are asking how they can witness to their faith; what can they do to help introduce their faith in Christ to others in simple and straightforward ways?

The Bishops of England and Wales recognise that simple acts of witness, accompanied by sincere prayer, can be a powerful call to faith. Traditional Catholic devotions such as making the sign of the cross with care and reverence, praying the Angelus, saying a prayer before and after our meals, to name only a few, are straightforward actions which both dedicate certain moments in our daily lives to Almighty God and demonstrate our love and trust in His goodness and providence. If these devotions have been lost or even forgotten, particularly in our homes and schools, we have much to gain from learning and living them again.

The Bishops have looked again at the role of devotions and the practice of penance, both of which can help to weave the Catholic faith into the fabric of everyday life. Our regular worship at Holy Mass on Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection, is the most powerful outward sign and witness of our faith in Jesus Christ to our family, friends and neighbours. Sunday must always remain at the heart of our lives as Catholics.

The Bishops also wish to remind us that every Friday is set aside as a special day of penitence, as it is the day of the suffering and death of the Lord. They believe it is important that all the faithful again be united in a common, identifiable act of Friday penance because they recognize that the virtue of penitence is best acquired as part of a common resolve and common witness. The law of the Church requires Catholics on Fridays to abstain from meat, or some other form of food, or to observe some other form of penance laid down by the Bishops' Conference.

The Bishops have decided to re-establish the practice that this penance should be fulfilled simply by abstaining from meat and by uniting this to prayer. Those who cannot or choose not to eat meat as part of their normal diet should abstain from some other food of which they regularly partake.

This decision came into effect from Friday 16 September 2011.

From : www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk where you will also find further questions/answers

Friday Penance: Will's story

<http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Catholic-Church/Media-Centre/Press-Releases/Press-Releases-2011/Friday-Penance-Will-s-story>

16 September 2011