



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — March 20, 2024

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From the Bishop

The Reconciliation of a Penitent

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. And we are a few days from the start of Holy Week, that precious time where the church and her faithful, in intentional and prayerful ways, walk the way of Jesus Christ right up to his death and resurrection. And then we gather again at the end of Holy Week to celebrate that on Easter, that great celebration of resurrection.

It is a time where we think in solemn and in specific ways about Jesus in His ministry, it is also an appropriate time for us to consider those things that separate us from God or separate us from God's people wherever they are to be found. And it is usually our own wrong-headedness and wrongdoing that does that.

I've been keenly aware of it lately, because I, like many people have been worried about the troubles of the world, the war and terrorism that we see, the gun violence that we see, the disrespect and absolute contempt that is held for people that hold differing opinions. That when we watch all of this, very often, we start to carry the burden of that with us, and we judge other people all along the way. And the thing that I'm very aware of in all of this is how rare it is to hear anyone say, I am sorry, I was wrong. And for Christians, that is something that we try to do with some regularity, because we

don't want to carry the burden that separates us from other people or that separates us from God. And that burden often is something that has made us turn away from God or turn away from other people. And we call that sin.

So the reconciliation of a penitent is different than praying with a big group about our sinfulness. It is one person sitting down with a priest, and I've been on both sides of this. And that one person starts by saying, "Bless me, I have sinned." And what a perfect way to say I've done something wrong, "Bless me, please, I have sinned." And the priest then responds, saying, "The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips that you may truly and humbly confess your sins." And then the penitent shares the things that have gone wrong, the thing that separates them from God or separates them for what they think God wants them to do. The things that separates them from other people. The ways that they've been hurtful or wrongheaded, or mean or mean spirited, or contemptuous or judgmental of other people, the ways that they have hurt somebody.

And then here is what is different about how we handle this in our denomination, the priest then doesn't give an assignment. The priest offers, as the Prayer Book says, council, direction, or comfort. I know as a priest, I have said in those times, have you considered spending some time working with a therapist about this? I've also asked people, have you considered whose forgiveness you need to ask? Is there someone you need to go and apologize to? Is there scripture you need to

reflect on? So I have spent some time asking as many questions as I have had offering any kind of suggestion to people. But there's some conversation that happens with a priest at that point, helping the person think about what might be helpful for them going forward.

And then after that discussion is ended, the priest says, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." And that the last thing that the priest says after that is, "The Lord has put away all your sins." It's done. You've been absolved, the sins have been put away. And then the penitent says, "Thanks be to God," and is able to walk away with not only a sense of freedom, letting go of that burden that they've been carrying, but also a sense of next steps, what they might want to do to make a change, or to make a correction, or to bring about some healing – their own and possibly somebody else's.

It is Holy Week, and I want to encourage you to ask your priest - and if you're in a parish that doesn't have a priest, call the next parish that does have one, I can tell you, any priest in this diocese would be happy to sit and offer you reconciliation of a penitent. It is something that they are rarely asked to do. And then the wonderful thing about doing this in Holy Week, is when you walk into Easter, you walk into that great celebration, without the burden of worry, or guilt, or regret. Amen and amen.

Easter Service at the Cathedral with Bishop Hughes

SUN, MAR 31 | 10 AM | Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, Newark

Join the Cathedral congregation as Bishop Hughes celebrates and preaches at the Easter Service. The service will be live streamed to the diocesan YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/@DioNewark/streams>) and remain available for later viewing.

Stories from Our Congregations

Parish shares Iftar meal with Muslim neighbors

"Ramadan Mubarak!" was a common shared greeting at Christ Church in Bloomfield & Glen Ridge when parishioners broke the fast at Iftar with Muslim neighbors from the Peace Island Institute (PII). About 50 people gathered together, with PII offering a presentation on Ramadan. Everyone listened to a recitation of the call to prayer, and then, in an adjoining room, Muslim attendees offered the Maghrib prayer just after sunset. The people of PII spread around the room to answer questions, as all ate from tables laden with delicious Turkish food, from lentil soup to baklava.

Afterward, members of PII asked for a tour of the church, and the Rev. Diana Wilcox reflected on the way in which Lent is a time in our faith for intentional practices that return our focus to God, drawing on the similarity to the focus of the fast in Ramadan. They were particularly interested in the labyrinth as both a prayer practice and a vehicle for pilgrimage.

*Wishing you
a blessed
Holy Week
& Easter*