

A Blessed Place to Be.

We have a large library. There are sections on theology, inspiring biographies, Bible background and devotional, to mention only a few. If anyone would like to borrow a book from us you are welcome. Recently an old hardback came into our hands. It was first printed in 1949. Some wonderful books have come our way that are over 100years old. Mostly devotional, they have stood the test of time. We didn't recognise the author of this volume and we were uncertain about the contents. We skim read it. We came across this illustration. As we were already thinking of taking the word, repentance, down from the shelf and giving it a dust then the illustration, if a little corny, was very apt.



“There is a story-and it is only a story - about a man who went to confession. During confession he stole the priest's watch. He then confessed to the priest that he had stolen a watch. The priest said: ‘You must make restitution.’ The thief replied, ‘I will give it to you, Father’. ‘No’, said the priest, ‘give it to the owner’. The man then said: ‘The owner won't take it back’. ‘In that case’, said the priest, ‘you can keep it’.”ⁱ

The man had missed out part of the equation when it comes to restitution or repentance and that is God. Whatever our clever excuses, self-justification, denial or projection of our faults onto others, ultimately we are all answerable to God. Our behaviour may put us at odds with other people but it destroys even more certainly our relationship with God. We lose the peace which is the birthright of every Christian. An uneasy conscience is not easy to live with.

Sometimes we are aware of a sense of guilt but can't find peace! What is the way forward? The first step is to stop trying. God is not like an angry father standing over us saying, “Repent, repent”. Last year two of us visited another community. We had never been there and we were a little apprehensive. We understand when visitors come to visit us for the first time and are nervous. One man said, “I have never done anything like this before”, as he looked around with apprehension when he first arrived at Redacre! If anything our nervousness increased when soon after our arrival we were invited to have afternoon tea with the community. Still cautious as to the etiquette, we sat together on a two-seater settee. Suddenly a Sister swept in, her Benedictine habit billowing out behind her and said to us, “Relax, relax”! Her smile was so sweet that we relaxed.

The smile of Jesus is sweet. The Lord comes to us and he says, “Relax, relax, I have dealt with your sin and guilt”. Repentance is not something we work up, it is a gift of God. It isn't a struggle. How does this gift become ours? We go to our loving, heavenly Father and ask him for the gift of repentance. In going to him in all our need we receive. Then, in the warmth of his embrace we know our sins forgiven. It is a blessed place to be. There is no limit, a hundred times a day we can return to that place of peace.

ⁱ Go to Heaven Fulton J Sheen