



Bridging the Gap: Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a funny word... what does it really mean? When I type it into Wikipedia, I'm pointed in the direction of 'bank reconciliation' (as in, 'I'm reconciling my accounts'), as well as being asked whether I'd like to visit a page about 'conflict resolution'... Of course, there's also the link to the page about 'the sacrament of reconciliation' which is where we get a chance to talk about our mistakes confidentially with a priest, and use it as an opportunity to ask God for forgiveness.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I'm rubbish with money. Reconciling my accounts is a job that I generally have to do when I realize that I've been prioritizing the wrong things. Instead of saving up to pay my car insurance at the end of the month, it's much more exciting to buy a new Jack Wills t-shirt off ebay or to go out for an evening

with friends. What I do when I reconcile my accounts is look through my online statement, and check where I've been spending my money - often with a little bit of regret!

And what about this whole thing of conflict resolution? Isn't that something that happens in war-torn areas of the world? Well, yes it is, but it's also something that happens day to day in my life. When I've come into conflict with somebody else, or I'm witnessing two other people arguing, it's my deep desire to resolve that situation. And generally, conflict resolution involves whoever is involved admitting that they've done something wrong / backing down / saying sorry. Because the more I get psyched up about how right I am and how wrong everybody else is, the more knotted up I get inside, and the more the conflict tends to escalate.

sometimes invest my time and energy in the wrong things. Taking time out to chat things over with my priest helps me to pinpoint where things aren't going smoothly, and to make adjustments.

And reconciliation is about resolving conflict. It's my chance to back down, rather than escalate the conflict with others. It's also a chance to recognize that sometimes I'm causing conflict within myself - a struggle between doing the right thing, and choosing something just because it seems easy. God wants to resolve that conflict - he wants to fill me with love for others, for myself and for him. And hearing from my priest (on behalf of God) that I'm forgiven helps me to forgive others more readily too!

So, this Lent, even if you haven't been for ages, why not try going to reconciliation with your priest? If you're cautious about speaking to him, you can always visit another one. Most parishes hold reconciliation services, where there's a specific chance to do it! Above all, take the opportunity to look back, acknowledge, say sorry, and move on, so that you can celebrate Easter with a bit more joy!

I think both these aspects of the word 'reconciliation' help me to understand why it's good to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation (or 'confession') this Lent. Like when I've been spending money unwisely, I

