



Allocutio



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Allocutio: Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is wounded by our sins; yet the Sacred Heart of Jesus loves us always because that heart sees the image of God in us. This allocutio is, despite appearances, a commentary on that.

Sometimes I like to go to a spot on the back cliffs of Howth. It overlooks the sea below and you are surrounded by nature: cliffs, ferns, gorse, all kinds of flora as well as sea-gulls, comorants, kittiwakes and so on. There is the sea vast and deep before you, there is the coast line and hills in the distance. There is a sense of God the Creator, his beauty reflected in the scene. And I think that that is why, even if they do not know it, many people take walks along there. They are soaking in the reflection of God all around them.

Recently when I went back to that place I found something that disturbed me. The rock I sit down on had all the signs of a party having been held: beer cans, bottles, crisp bags, plastic bags and the like. Oh yes the beauty of the place remained. But what a pity it was so despoiled by the litter. Still I got on with my prayer and allowed myself to dialogue with God as best I could.

On my way back to the car park I took a slightly different route. Still a beautiful place but alas, it was despoiled everywhere by litter! The next day I came back again and decided to find a new place. I wanted somewhere unspoilt. I took a different track through the heather and ferns and gorse towards a cliff in the hope that this would not be despoiled by litter. It looked promising until I came to the place where the incline took a sharp fall to the sea. I looked over in the hope of seeing beauty. I did indeed see beauty! But I was also dismayed to see just below the edge more beer cans, bottles, cigarette butts, left-overs from a take-away.

Now I had by this stage been wondering what God wanted to communicate with me that day and it came to me then. It hit me that God was showing me a pale reflection of the beauty of each soul but how it is sullied by sin. Our souls are like beauty spots in God's eyes. He sees our deep desires for love; he sees our longing for justice, truth, peace; he sees our delicateness, our fragility but also our inner drives for divinity. And just as the Hill of Howth for us is beautiful so we are beautiful in God's eyes. We are each created like Garden of Edens in which God would love to stroll and find peace and calm within us. But alas just as I did on Howth He so often finds we are despoiled by our sins: pettiness, jealousies, lack of trust in Him, negative attitudes towards others and life.

It also came to me that just as I could put aside the ugliness of the litter and still see the beauty of the place, so too God, despite our sins, can still see the original beauty put there in our souls by his heavenly Father. And when later that day I received Holy Communion it hit me that God had come to pay a visit to that beautiful place that is my soul. But his visit might have had a touch of sadness in it because of sins I had committed.

I had noticed two extremes of litter on Howth: small little cigarette butts, but also believe it or not, a car deeply embedded in a gully half way down to the sea. These symbolised for me the smaller and the greater sins that can despoil our souls. But the signs of a gorse fire reminded me too that while the small cigarette butt may symbolise a venial sin, still a venial sin can be the start of a more serious evil.

As I reflected after communion that day I also thought: what way would Jesus like to find my soul? Surely the way I would like to find the back cliffs of Howth—without dirt, without litter! It would make my next visit to that beauty spot wonderful if all the litter was gone. And so how about also in my soul



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getting rid of all that litter of sin so that when next Jesus comes my soul would be like a beauty spot completely cleaned up!

When all these reflections began to hit me that morning I was not aware that confession would become a possibility for me that evening; so I took my opportunity. And my confessor gave me some advice that reminded me of what a Dominican priest said one evening a few weeks back on EWTN. He was encouraging frequent confession. And he dealt with the objection that many people feel even if they do not say it openly: my sins are always the same, am I a hypocrite going to confession with the same old sins?

What he said next struck me: our souls are like gardens. Gardens have weeds, many weeds just keep coming up. The only way to deal with weeds is to keep the pressure on them and keep weeding them out. If you neglect the weeds they may overrun your garden and I think we all have seen images of Gardens that have been unattended for a long time. In the same way the best way to deal with our sins is to go to Confession and to go frequently. The Magdalene thought Jesus was the gardener (Jn20). She was right! He is the Gardener of our souls so let's get his help to clear the litter of our sins.

My experience has been that sometimes in tending gardens there may be so many weeds you do not even see some of them the first time. It is only by going back to the flower bed or border frequently will you really get on top of them. And similarly by going to frequent confession you will begin to discover other sins you had not noticed and by dealing with them you will provide a beautiful place for God to visit. Indeed wouldn't it be lovely to sense that God not only sees the beauty of your soul but that your soul would be one of his especially favoured places because it is not despoiled by the litter of sins, even venial! Going to confession is about weeding out our sins.

Finally I paid one more visit to the back cliffs of Howth. And this time I brought a sizable plastic bag with me. And I went to that place I find special and I picked up all the beer cans and bottles and papers and cigarette butts and took them away with me. It is only a small dent in the huge job that has to be done out there. But it was my prophetic gesture that I am going also to tackle all those sins that cause my soul to disappoint Jesus when he comes to visit me.

How better to bring consolation to the wounded heart of Jesus than to work on eradicating our sins!
Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill