

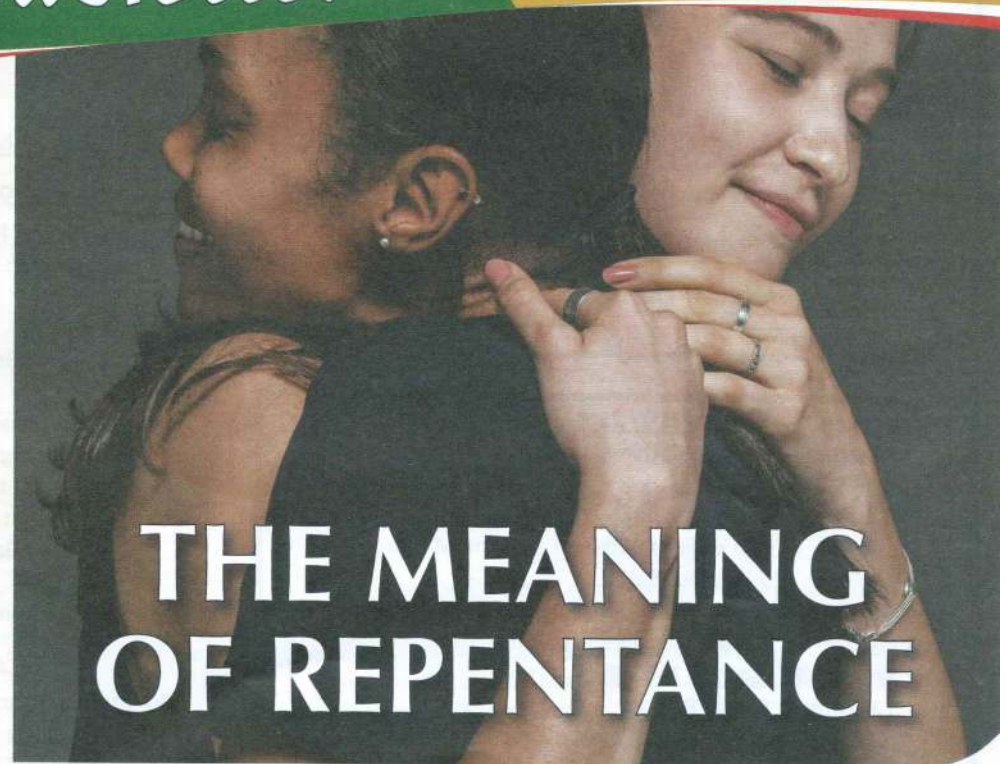
Parish Newsletter

At the core of Jesus' message were these all-important words in today's Gospel, 'Repent. For the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' It is arguable that many Catholics don't properly understand what Jesus meant by the word repentance. More often than not they understand it primarily in moral rather than in religious terms, as a precondition for forming an intimate relationship with Jesus rather than as its consequence.

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* which literally means, 'a change of mind,' i.e., in one's thinking about God which afterwards may or may not lead to a change in one's behaviour. The story of the prodigal son in Lk 15:11-32 is an outstanding example of this dynamic.

Firstly, we are told that the wayward son 'came to his senses' and decided to return to his father. In a way there was nothing particularly spiritual about this. In all probability it was a matter of expediency and enlightened self-interest. Even a life of slavery at home would be better than the miserable form of slavery he was currently enduring.

Secondly, when the prodigal son returned home his true conversion began when he was challenged to change his thinking about his father. He acknowledged that instead of being greeted in the cold and critical



THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

way he deserved and expected, he had to accept that his father greeted him in a loving and accepting way he didn't expect or deserve. His father's non-judgmental embrace converted him from one way of thinking about his dad to another. Whereas the first stage of his conversion was occasioned by his own experience of misery, the second stage was occasioned by the revelation of the father's unconditional love. This is an important point. True conversion as a change of behaviour is not a requirement for right relationship with God: rather, it is a graced consequence of it.

Thirdly, once the younger son knew what his father was really like, we can presume that his behaviour

began to change. The very next day he may have offered to help around the farm, not as a matter of cheerless duty, like his elder brother, but as a matter of loving conviction.

Properly understood, our repentance is a grace-initiated change in thinking and behaviour that results from experiencing the kingdom of God. As St Paul explained, 'the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rm 14:17).

— Pat Collins

After the Consecration

The mystery of faith.

**We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection until
you come again.**

THE COMMUNION RITE

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins
of the world.

Blessed are those called to the supper
of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy

**that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

Communion Antiphon

(Cf. Ps 33:6)

**Look toward the Lord and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.**

Prayer after Communion

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, receiving the grace
by which you bring us to new life,
we may always glory in your gift.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Reflection

*In what ways has Jesus been a great
light for you?*



Lesson

*Jesus is the great light, who dawns
on all people — Jew and Gentile
alike.*



Prayer

*Lord, when we are in the darkness,
you shine the light of the hope of
Jesus on us.*