

# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Flatrock Penitential Pilgrimage

Saturday, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005

*Inaugural Homily by Most Rev. William A. Carew*

Our pilgrimage has brought us to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. At Lourdes, our blessed Mother presented herself as the Immaculate Conception. Her message there was Do penance; and Pray for the conversion of sinners. At Fatima, as Our Lady of the Rosary, she again called for Penance and Prayer for the conversion of sinners. "There is no way of casting out such [evil] spirits as this, except by prayer and fasting" [Mt 17 20].

We are answering her call by a pilgrimage of penance, and prayers of reparation for sins; for every sin committed is an offence against the Sacred Heart of Jesus and against *Mary's* Immaculate Heart.

"Though we are many in number, we form one Body in Christ" [Rom 12 5]. "[We] are Christ's Body, all its organs depending on each other. If one part is suffering, all the rest suffer with it; if one organ is treated with honour, all the other parts find pleasure in it" [I Cor 12 26s]. That is why our penance and prayer can make reparation for sinners and build up the Mystical Body.

"This first of all I ask: that petition, prayer, entreaty and thanksgiving should be offered for all mankind... Such prayer is our duty. It is what God our Saviour expects of us, since it is His will that all men should be saved, and be led to recognize the truth: There is only one God, and only one mediator between God and men: Jesus Christ, Who... gave Himself as a ransom for all" [I Tim 2 2ss].

"I am glad of my sufferings... [for] in my body I help to pay off the debts which the sufferings of Christ leave still to be paid, for the sake of His Body, the Church" [Col 1 24]. Like Saint Paul, we can do penance not only for our own offences, but for the sins of others.

Fifty-three years ago I was a curate at our Cathedral parish, and spent about ten hours each week in the confessional. I heard many devout persons who confessed every week; and also some people who had not been to the Sacraments for many years. To great sinners I felt I could not give grievous penances, which they might refuse to perform, or which would discourage them from future confessions.

Relying on the unity of the Mystical Body, when I heard a fervent penitent, I would say: You only deserve as penance to say an Our Father or a Hail Mary. But I have given light penances to some great sinners; would you accept some of what they deserve, such as the Five Sorrowful Mysteries or the Stations of the Cross, to make up what is lacking in reparation to the Sacred Heart. Those good souls accepted this proposal with joy, and would even ask for more during their later confessions.

Well, that is what we have been doing today: doing penance, and making reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of our Mother Mary: for our own failings, but moreover for all sinners throughout the Church and all over the world. We have tried to respond to Our Lady's call to prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners; so that we can say to her: O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. Our Lady of the Rosary, grant that we may imitate its Mysteries and obtain what they promise, through Christ your Son and our Lord. Amen.

*Laus Deo Semper*