

**“EXCUSES”**

The newly graduated Police Cadet, speaking on behalf of his fellow classmates at graduation ceremonies, began his speech: “Today, crime has come to an end!”

I recognize the hubris in those words and the zeal from which they were born.

At the time of my ordination, the attitude I conveyed was: “Today, sin has come to an end!”

Like many newly ordained priests, it was going to be my task to do what Jesus already did – save humanity.

Reality soon hit. It only took a few months. The crash happened in the confessional.

“Anthony” came to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He confessed his sin. In my desire to bring sin to an end, not only in his life, but also in the world around us, I used a “technique” that I recently developed.

After his confession, I attempted to “rationalize” his sin, to “soften” it. “Well, you know, many people in your situation would have done the same.”

I continued, “If your friend did not put you in that position, you most probably would not have resorted to what you did.” Trying to make him feel less guilty, I reminded him, “You are human. We all struggle with that sin, and there are many other sins more serious than that. Don’t take it so hard.”

I continued to babble on until he finally raised an open hand to me in a gesture that said, “Stop. That is enough.”

“Father, stop making excuses for me. I sinned. I want to admit my sinfulness, and to beg for God’s forgiveness and grace to strengthen me in the future. Your job is not to excuse away my sin. Your job is to give me God’s forgiveness!”

That encounter was 30 years ago. I learned early in my ministry that sin has not come to an end. As much as I wanted to excuse it away, that penitent’s humility taught me that sin is still very much real, and always will be, despite my best efforts.

The suffering, death, and Resurrection of Jesus have saved humanity. Forgiveness for sin is readily available, any time and in any place.

My ministry is not to excuse sin away, but to forgive it in the name of Jesus Christ!

*F. Mike*