

From the Pastor



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When we think about our own sins, we have a tendency to play down how horrible they really are. But every sin is destructive; it is a rebellion against God, our Creator and Redeemer. And we should be grateful that the Church is courageous enough to remind us of that, so that we don't ever get comfortable in our sins.

St. John Paul II, during his papacy, had a run-in with the Italian Mafia about this. In 1982 he visited Sicily and condemned the Mafia's activity in a highly publicized speech. This gave courage to priests and lay people in southern Italy, who renewed their efforts to defend the common good.

In 1993 he again traveled to Sicily, and again explicitly denounced the Mafia in a speech delivered in the city of Agrigento. The illegal and immoral activities of organized crime were like a social disease in Sicily, and the Pope spoke out against them. Two months later, car bombs exploded outside two churches in Rome, one of which was the pope's Cathedral, St John Lateran. Later investigations traced these bombs back the Mafia.

Two months after that, an anti-Mafia priest in Sicily was murdered on his doorstep, shot in the back of the neck. A year later, in November 1994, John Paul II made another trip to Sicily. And in spite of the obvious danger, he once again spoke out against the injustices of violence and corruption. "Those who are responsible for violence and arrogance stained by human blood will have to answer before the justice of God," he said. "Today, there is a strong yearning in Sicily to be redeemed and liberated, especially from the power of the Mafia."

Sin matters; it is destructive of its victims, and it is destructive of its perpetrators, and we should be grateful that, through the teachings of the Church, the Holy Spirit continues to remind us of this, even when it's not popular.

+ Father Roger