

26<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## Sorry

**“We do earnestly repent,  
and are heartily sorry for these misdoings;  
the remembrance of them is grievous unto us;  
the burden of them is intolerable.”**

The Book of Common Prayer, *Holy Communion, 'General Confession'*

So, I got The Lord's Prayer wrong at a wedding. It was a "mixed marriage", the bride from England and the groom from Scotland. The Presbyterian groom was familiar with "debts and debtors" in the Lord's Prayer, while the Anglican bride used "trespasses". So, we decided on "trespasses".

I indicated to the congregation that we would be saying the Lord's Prayer at the conclusion of the final Prayer, and that the couple had chosen the "trespasses" version. But when we got to the Lord's Prayer, I forgot! I ploughed on with my familiar "debts and debtors". Confusion reigned! The cacophony of noise in the wedding chapel was undignified to say the least. So ... I stopped everyone, said "Sorry!", suggested we start again with *everyone*, including the minister, getting the "trespasses" bit right, and we concluded the Lord's Prayer in a more prayerful fashion.

There were some comments about it afterwards – more on the lines of "I like the way you handled that, minister," than any expected criticism. My gaffe didn't appear to have spoiled the wedding. In truth, it didn't spoil it for me either, because I'm well used to dealing with the mistakes I make and learning from them – *and* it gives me a good story to tell.

So, what about the "Sorry!" I offered? Sorry for getting it wrong, of course. Like you, I have high standards and don't like messing things up. Sorry to the congregation too. The confusion was my fault, so folk deserved an apology. But should my "sorry" have been aimed at God? No! I reckon God would have enjoyed the moment *and* appreciated a Lord's Prayer offered twice. God can make sense of my stumbling prayers.

I "earnestly repent" because I need to. I confess to being "heartily sorry for my misdoings" when I should. But the remembrance of *this* mistake is not grievous unto me. The burden of my stumbling prayers isn't intolerable, not when a minister's confusion over "debts" and "trespasses" has put a smile on God's face, and on mine, and maybe on yours now too!

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, yes, I am sorry when I should be. And that's often, as you know! Amen*

*An original reflection © Tom Gordon*

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