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We've all heard of Leonard Cheshire. During the war he was awarded the Victoria Cross after completing a hundred bombing missions on heavily defended targets which would inevitably have cut short the lives of many innocent people and pilots. After the war, with his wife Sue Ryder, he established the well-known Cheshire homes for the sick and disabled. I wonder was this his way for making up for these bombing raids which after the war, may have weighed heavily on his conscience.

Zacchaeus, a tax collector for the Romans, fully intended to make recompense for overcharging his clients whilst retaining the extra money for themselves. This was common practice among tax collectors at the time. In order to make up for this He tells Jesus he is willing to give half his money to the poor and pay back fourfold the people he had wronged. Wow, that's a real turnaround.

Do we ever feel the need to make up for things we're done which we're not proud of? November which is upon us is designated by the Church as a month of prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Purgatory makes sense because even though people have repented of their sins in this life they may not have fully faced up to the consequences of their actions. For instance this could apply to fathers, and sometimes mothers who weren't there or didn't give enough quality time to their children in their formative years when they needed them most. Now that their children are young adults, these same parents may feel the need to make up for this and reveal a more considerate side to their character, howsoever belated this may be.

Another example might be If I gave my parents a hard time whilst growing up, the inner voice of conscience may be telling me that I show them extra love and attention in their reclining years. If they ask me to go that proverbial 'mile' with them, with a willing heart, I will go two. I'll go even further and anticipate their needs, sparing them the discomfort of having to ask me.

Some non-Catholic Christians used often tease us Catholics about running back and forth to confession whilst at the same time not facing up to the consequences of our failures. There is more to confession than that. Repentance involves a change of heart with a strong desire to atone for the times we've let people down. As in the case of Zacchaeus, this may apply to our honesty involving other people's money.

At a conference here on dementia some years ago we were told that some people who take on the role of executor or power of attorney for the vulnerable often cut corners with honesty and have no qualms in writing out cheques for themselves from the person's account for unnecessary things. We're told that's quite widespread.

As part of our repentance we can make up for these sins by being more generous in giving to charity.

For a small man, Zacchaeus must have felt ten foot tall when Jesus came to his house for lunch. Jesus comes to my house in Holy Communion and, like Zacchaeus, knows the great efforts I've made to make up for past sins so that the fullness of His salvation may be mine in the here and hereafter.