

24 HOURS FOR THE LORD

March 4 - 5, 2016



JUBILEE OF MERCY

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

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RECEIVE MERCY
24 Hours for the Lord
Friday 4th March – Saturday 5th March

This is a time of prayer when, in union with Pope Francis, we pray for one another, that we may rediscover the path back to the Lord by returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

PREPARATION

In this Holy Year of Mercy it is fitting that we seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Mercy, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. How do we make a good confession? How do we prepare? Time spent in preparing for your Confession is time well spent! Without preparation it is difficult to make a really good Confession. Good preparation has two parts: taking to heart the reality of God's love for me; taking to heart the reality of my own life.

First: a reflection on the unwavering love of God for me.

I thank God for the gift of life, that I am made, out of love, for a life with God for all eternity. That is God's deepest desire. My sin takes me on another route – away from God. *“O my God, I thank you for loving me.”*

Second: an examination of conscience.

What is my life really like? I invite God's Holy Spirit to shine his light on those destructive or dark ways of thinking or acting which rob me of peace of heart and mind. *“I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and not loving you.”*

There are many ways of reflecting on my actions and intentions and seeing how they fail to live up to God's love for me and his invitation to true life. These three questions give us one good way of doing so. Think about each one carefully and honestly.

How is my relationship with God?

I think about my trust in God; am I thankful for all that I have received? What about my faithfulness to prayer? To Mass? *God loves us, and yearns for us to love Him in return!*”

How are my relationships with others – my family, my friends and neighbours, those I work with, the needy, my parish?

Here I ask myself about my honesty, faithfulness, compassion, patience and readiness to forgive. What are my attitudes towards those who love me? Am I indifferent to the plight of others? What part do I play in the life of my parish? Does my life witness to my Christian faith? *“I entrust myself as child into God's arms, and rest, assured that those arms support me, even in times of struggle.”*

How is my relationship with others?

How do I treat myself? Do I respect my body, its integrity and its needs? Do I over indulge in any appetite? Am I chaste, not only in my behaviour, but in the use of my imagination and thoughts, in my heart and in my intentions? *“I adore you, my God, I love you with all my heart.”*

God never grows tired of forgiving us.

God is rich in mercy; his forgiveness is wider than the ocean, deeper than the sea, extending from east to west. God's forgiveness is limitless, his love constant and lavish. This gift of mercy and forgiveness is available to us in the Sacrament of Mercy, the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

It doesn't matter how long it is since we made our last confession, if we feel in our hearts, “I must go to confession”, this is the prompting of the Holy Spirit drawing us closer to God's love. In the Sacrament of Mercy we experience the goodness and mercy of God, who forgives, and forgets, and embraces us with his love.

A GUIDE TO CELEBRATING CONFESSION.

When you approach the priest, make the Sign of the Cross. The priest will briefly invite you to have confidence and trust in God's love for you. If you are nervous or unsure, simply say so – often just saying we are nervous helps us to relax. Remember, the priest is your friend “in Christ” - he too has to confess his sins.

Mention how long it has been since your last confession – that gives a context for your confession. Say something like, “It has been about 'X' years, or, 'X' months, or 'X' weeks, since I was last at confession.

Then simply talk to the priest, in your own way, about your life and about those things that worry you, and have robbed you of peace of mind and heart. Take your time; it helps to use a phrase such as, “I am sorry for....” or “I ask forgiveness for....”

The priest may offer you a word of advice and encouragement. He will give you a “penance” which is a prayer or action for you to do as a sign of your sincerity in making a fresh start. He will then invite you to say an Act of Sorrow or Contrition – if you need help with this say so to the priest. This is an Act of Sorrow you may be familiar with:

- **O My God, I thank you for loving me, I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.**

The priest then prays the prayer of Absolution that, through the ministry of the Church, God may grant you pardon and peace, and he absolves you from your sins “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. Now you can go in peace to glorify the Lord by your life!