

A Personal Penitential Prayer in preparation for Christmas

Advent is a time when we seek a change of heart that we may truly celebrate Christmas. In preparation for this great feast many celebrate this "change of heart" in the Sacrament of Penance. Confession to a priest is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance but what are we to do this year, when because of coronavirus, it is so difficult to come to the parish church? Pope Francis has spoken about this situation. He said that we should do what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says. The Catechism reminds us that the confessor is not the master of God's forgiveness, but its servant. Only God forgives sin and God, who is the Father of tenderness, waits for the return of the sinner, and always welcomes with a loving embrace - God's forgiveness is immediate! In our present uniquely difficult situation, when it is not possible to come to the Church for Confession, speak to God from your heart; acknowledge truthfully what you have done or failed to do, and with all your heart ask forgiveness with a sincere Act of Sorrow, confident that God always forgives the contrite. Later, when coronavirus has released its grip, we can return to the Church and avail of Confession, and celebrate the forgiveness that has been so freely given. You may find this Penitential Prayer in preparation for Christmas helpful.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almighty and merciful God,
I come in the name of your Son
to receive your mercy and grace in my time of need.
Give me a new heart to love you,
so that my life may reflect the image of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

8:12; 15:9-10;12

Jesus said:

“I am the light of the world;
anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark
but will have the light of life.”

Again, Jesus said: “I have loved you just as the Father has loved me.
Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my
love - This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.”

A time of reflection.

A world of darkness is a world of confusion

So many are confused about life.
So many are lost in darkness.
So many are searching for happiness but cannot find it.
So many are overwhelmed by loneliness.

I ask myself, "Am I living in darkness?"

Darkness in my selfish choices.
Darkness in my constant complaining.
Darkness in my unreasonableness.
Darkness in my refusal to forgive others.
Darkness in my hurtful comments.
Darkness when I abuse the goodness of others.

Darkness in peace disrupted.
Darkness in violent words and actions.
Darkness in my jealousy.
Darkness in my self-deception.
Darkness in my anxiety and fear.
Darkness when I am bad news for others.

Darkness in love corrupted
Darkness in self-absorption and empty pleasure.
Darkness in the digital world.
Darkness in the exploitation of others.
Darkness in addictions.
Darkness when I shut out the light.

Darkness in the hungry people.
Darkness in the homeless people.
Darkness in the sad faces I see.
Darkness in waste.
Darkness in lack of care for the environment.
Darkness when I shut God out of my life.

A time for an examination of life - followed by a general confession of sin, saying:

I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers, and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore, I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers, and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.

The Act of Sorrow

**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.**

Proclamation of praise and thanksgiving.

O give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
R/. Great is his love, love without end.

Give thanks to the God of gods,
R/. Great is his love, love without end.

Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
R/. Great is his love, love without end.

To the God of heaven give thanks.
R/. Great is his love, love without end.

Concluding Prayer

Lord our God,
You made the light that scatters all darkness.
Let Christ, the light of lights, shine on us
and free us from the darkness of sin.
We ask this in his name,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.