

A Personal Penitential Prayer in preparation for Easter 2021

Easter is the most important feast in the Christian year. Many prepare for this feast by the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. Confession to a priest is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance, but because of the restrictions caused by the pandemic, it is not possible to celebrate the Sacrament at this time. What are we to do? Pope Francis has spoken about this situation. He 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. Then, with all your heart, ask forgiveness with a sincere Act of Sorrow, confident that God always forgives the contrite. Later, when Covid-19 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 Easter helpful.

Lord,
hear the prayers of those who call on you,
forgive the sins of those who confess to you,
and in your merciful love
give us your pardon and your peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 8: 34-37

“Jesus called the people and his disciples to him and said, ‘If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. What gain, then, is it for anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life? And indeed, what can anyone offer in exchange for his life?’”

Examination of Conscience.

This reflection is based on extracts from the Passion according to St Mark.

“It was two days before the passover....and the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by some trick.”
(Mark14:1-2)

Have I spoken falsely of another?

Have I set out to destroy the character of another?

Have I twisted the truth to suit myself?

“Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, approached the chief priests with an offer to hand Jesus over to them. They were delighted to hear it, and promised to give him money.” (Mark14: 10-11)

Have I betrayed my Church to delight/impress others?

Have I compromised myself for material gain?

Have I neglected love for ambition?

“They came to a plot of land called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Stay here while I pray.' He came back and found them sleeping, and he said, 'Had you not the strength to stay awake one hour? Stay awake and pray not to be put to the test.'”
(Mark14: 32-42)

Have I prayed frequently and fervently or only when in difficulty?

Have I taken the time to pray for others?

Have I neglected to worship with God's people on a Sunday?

“Peter started cursing and swearing, 'I do not know the man you speak of.' And at once the cock crowed for a second time, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will have disowned me three times.'” (Mark14: 66-72)

Have I betrayed those who trust me most?

Have I been afraid to profess my faith?

Have I neglected to defend the good name of another?

“They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'What harm has he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd handed him over to be crucified.” (Mark15:6-15)

Have I shirked responsibility for my actions?

Have I been lazy or neglectful of my responsibilities?

Have I turned a blind eye to that which is wrong?

“The soldiers stripped him and dressed him up in purple. They struck his head with a reed and spat on him. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.” (Mark15: 16-20)

Have I been violent in word or action?

Have I abused my own dignity or that of others?

Have I mocked human dignity by what I watch or read?

General Confession of sins.

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.

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.

God and Father of us all,
you have forgiven our sins and sent us your peace.
Help us to forgive each other,
and to work together to build your peace in our society.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing.

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil,
And bring us to everlasting life. Amen