



Pope Francis – Morning Homily 20 March 2020.

This is a longer version of the text in COVID 9. It is followed by an article about the recent letter for Confessors from Cardinal Piacenza, the Major Penitentiary of the Vatican, .

When I read or listen to this passage of the Prophet Hosea, which we heard in the First Reading [which says]: “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God,” when I hear it, there comes to mind a song that Carlo Buti sang 75 years ago, and that Italian families in Buenos Aires loved to listen to: “Return to your Papa. He will sing a lullaby again to you.” Return: but it’s your Papa who asks you to return. God is your Papa; he isn’t a judge; He is your Papa: Return home, listen, come.” And that memory — I was a small boy — brings me immediately to the Papa of chapter 15 of Luke, that Father that it says: “while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him,” that son who had gone away with all the money and had squandered it. However, if he saw him from afar, it’s because he was waiting for him. He would go up to the terrace — how many times a day! — during the day and days, months, years, perhaps, waiting for his son. He saw him from afar. Return to your Papa, return to your Father. He is waiting for you. It’s God’s tenderness that speaks to us, especially in Lent. It’s the time to enter into ourselves and remember the Father and return to Papa.

“No, Father, I’m ashamed to return because . . . You know Father, I have made so many . . . , I’ve done a lot “What does the Lord say? “Return, I will heal your faithlessness; I will love you freely, for my anger has turned from you. I will be as dew to you; you shall blossom as a lily; you shall strike root as a tree of Lebanon.” Return to your Father who waits for you. The God of tenderness will heal us; He will heal us of the many, many wounds of life and of the many awful things we’ve done. Everyone has their own!

However, think of this: to return to God is to return to an embrace, to the Father’s embrace. And think of the other promise that Isaiah makes: “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” He is able to transform us, He is able to change our heart, but it’s necessary to take the first step: to return. It’s not to go to God, no: it’s to return home.

And Lent always points to this conversion of heart that, in the Christian custom, is embodied in the Sacrament of Confession. It’s the moment to — I don’t know if to “adjust accounts,” I don’t like that — but to let God whiten us, God purify us, God embrace us.

I know that many of you go to Confession for Easter to meet with God again. However, many will say to me today: “But, Father, where can I find a priest, a confessor, because one can’t leave home? And I want to make peace with the Lord, I want Him to embrace me, that my Papa embrace me . . . What can I do if I can’t find priests?” Do what the Catechism says; it’s very clear: if you don’t find a priest to hear your Confession, talk with God, He is your Father, and tell Him the truth” Lord, I’ve done this, and that, and that . . . I’m sorry,” and ask Him for forgiveness with all your heart, with the Act of Contrition and promise Him: “Afterwards I will go to Confession, but forgive me now.” And you will return to God’s grace immediately. As the Catechism teaches, you yourself can approach God’s forgiveness without having a priest at hand. Think: it’s the moment! And this is the right moment, the opportune moment. And Act of Contrition well made, and so our soul will become white as snow. It would be good if today this “return” resounded in our ears, “return to your Papa, return to your Father.” He is waiting for you and He will celebrate you.

Vatican's Major Penitentiary writes to confessors at Easter

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, the Vatican's Major Penitentiary, writes to confessors at Easter in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

By Fr. Benedict Mayaki, SJ

Cardinal Piacenza opens his letter reminding confessors that “mercy does not stop” and “God does not distance Himself”.

The letter was published on the website of the [Apostolic Penitentiary](#) on 4 April.

The Cardinal writes in respect of the difficulties faced by Christian communities in the light of restrictions put in place to stem the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

He notes that social distancing might be necessary for health reasons, but it should not translate into distance from the Church or the Sacraments.

Mercy does not stop

Cardinal Piacenza acknowledges that mercy is expressed in the creativity employed by many priests to make pastoral care available to the People of God. He adds that in these times more than ever before, “everyone needs the closeness and caress of Jesus.”

The Cardinal notes that mercy expresses itself in the “small gestures of tenderness and love made towards the poorest.” In this regard, he gives examples of coronavirus sufferers, healthcare workers, the lonely and the homeless.

If the ordinary celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not possible, the Cardinal enjoins all confessors not to stop their work of mercy, but rather fulfill their “priestly role as intercessors” conferred on them at ordination. He invites them “to pray, console, and present souls to God’s Divine Mercy”.

Call to Priests

The Cardinal stresses that mercy does not stop even if the sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated without the physical presence of the people. He notes that salvation flows from the Eucharist which is the source of all grace for the Church and the world.

He calls on priests to rediscover the essence of their priestly ministry. He reminds them that priests are ministers of Christ’s work which is “the sacramental implementation of salvation.”

Other expressions of mercy

Cardinal Piacenza notes that mercy expresses itself in every consideration to which the pandemic pushes us. It is “in the rediscovery of the values which are worth living and dying for: in silence, adoration and prayer, and in the rediscovery of the closeness of others and of God, above all.”

“Mercy does not stop at the celebration of the sacred liturgy,” adds the Cardinal. Rather, it becomes “lived charity that extends its friendly hand to those who suffer, and the forgiveness of God through priestly ministry.”

Even those who have died are not exempt from mercy, writes Cardinal Piacenza. They are reached by prayers of suffrage “in the Paschal certainty that with death, relationships are not broken but are transformed, and strengthened into the communion of saints.”

Cardinal Piacenza concludes his letter by entrusting the ministry of reconciliation, and this unique Easter, to the protection of Our Lady. He prays that “everyone may be given the new life for which every person yearns.”

The original text is only in Italian at [va.penitenzieria-dissorsi](#)