

Dear Padre,

If God is so forgiving, why can't I just ask for his forgiveness directly? Why do I need to go to confession and ask a man, a priest, to have my sins forgiven?

It's ironic that some claim a man cannot forgive sins. That same accusation was leveled against Jesus himself when he forgave the paralyzed man (see Mark 2:5-7). But Jesus clearly told his apostles they were to be instruments of his forgiveness. When he appeared to them in the upper room after his resurrection he said: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:23).

James the Apostle also endorses the concept of humans administering God's forgiveness: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

Baptism, another sacrament administered by a person, starts our discipleship with Jesus. It cleanses us of all sin—including original sin. But even as Jesus' disciples, we are sometimes unfaithful and need to ask forgiveness. It's not surprising, then, that Jesus has given us another sacrament—again administered by a person—for the forgiveness of sins after baptism: the sacrament of reconciliation.

God is forgiving—so forgiving that when people killed Jesus, his Son, he did not punish and destroy the world. Rather, he used the death of Jesus to demonstrate just how patient and forgiving he is. Our gravest sins—murder, adultery, a life lived apart from God—require the intervention of the sacrament of penance. But even confessing smaller sins is useful. If nothing else, it keeps us humble enough to remember that all of us need forgiveness because all of us sin.

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A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

Going to confess is not like going to the dry cleaner's to have a stain removed....If there is no love in the sacrament, it is not as Jesus wishes it to be. If it is functional, it is not how Jesus wants it to be. Love....toward the brother and the sister who are forgiven sinners. This is the fundamental relationship.

ADDRESS TO APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY, MARCH 12, 2021



Calendar

Monday

APRIL 4

Lenten Weekday
Dn 13:1-9, 15-17,
19-30, 33-62
or 13:41c-62
Jn 8:12-20

Tuesday

APRIL 5

Lenten Weekday
Nm 21:4-9
Jn 8:21-30

Wednesday

APRIL 6

Lenten Weekday
Dn 3:14-20,
91-92, 95
Jn 8:31-42

Thursday

APRIL 7

Lenten Weekday
Gn 17:3-9
Jn 8:51-59

Friday

APRIL 8

Lenten Weekday
Jer 20:10-13
Jn 10:31-42

Saturday

APRIL 9

Lenten Weekday
Ez 37:21-28
Jn 11:45-56

Sunday

APRIL 10

Palm Sunday of the
Lord's Passion
Lk 19:28-40
Is 50:4-7
Phil 2:6-11
Lk 22:14-23:56
or 23:1-49