



**CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL OF FORGIVENESS:  
PARISH RESOURCES FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2017**

PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF WORSHIP, DIOCESE OF ST. CLOUD, MN

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## INTRODUCTION

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ. (Ephesians 2:4-5)*

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation has declined in many churches across the country and around the world. Liturgists and theologians have analyzed this trend and suggest that fewer people see a need for this sacrament or they simply do not understand its importance in the life of the Church. Despite this, there is a need for God's mercy and a deep hunger for healing and wholeness.

Building from our experience during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, the Church continues to invite people to share deeply in the gift of God's mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Works of Mercy. God's mercy is a prominent theme in Pope Francis' messages to the world. From the very beginning of his pontificate, he has invited the church to reflect on this amazing gift. In his first Angelus Address, Francis says, "Let us never tire of asking God's forgiveness."<sup>1</sup> This simple phrase realizes that we are sinners in need of forgiveness and when we daily seek the Living God, we are abundantly blessed and receive the grace to live authentically out our baptismal promises.

During the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis asked every diocese of the world to celebrate a dedicated period of Reconciliation during the season of Lent (*Misericordiae Vultus (MV)*).<sup>2</sup> The event in our diocese last year was a great success and Bishop Kettler has asked us to continue inviting people to celebrate God's mercy. The Church of St. Cloud will celebrate its second "Festival of Forgiveness" on Friday, March 31. Since the Church is the sacrament of Christ to the world, let us be the "face of the Father's mercy."<sup>3</sup>

This festival is intended to reach those who have fallen away from the Church, those who have been away from the sacrament for a long period, and those who celebrate the sacrament often. It truly is a time for the whole community to gather and reflect on God's gifts and seek healing. Let us rejoice in the abundant gift of God's love, which heals and strengthens. This is an opportunity to re-catechize the faithful about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is a time to reconcile with one another and seek peace

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, "Angelus Address," March 17, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> MV, 17 ([https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html)).

<sup>3</sup> MV, 1.

and joy with family and neighbor. It is a time for prayer and reflection, and for the People of God fall more deeply in love with Christ.

This resource has been prepared to help parishes and other sites in planning for the “Festival of Forgiveness.” We encourage parishes, in whatever ways they are able, to gather in prayer. This might mean Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, a Liturgy of the Word, or a Penitential Service from the appendix of the *Rite of Penance*. But most importantly, the faithful are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during this festival.

## **FESTIVAL OF FORGIVENESS LOCATIONS**

Each deanery will determine the times and locations for the celebration of the sacrament.

## **THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

*Rend your hearts . . . and return to the LORD, your God, For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment. (Joel 2:13)*

### **PREACHING GOD’S MERCY**

The ministry of reconciliation begins long before anyone has entered into the confessional; God’s word is at the center of this ministry. Through preaching, priests and deacons invite the faithful to reflect on God’s mercy. Well-prepared homilies break open the scriptures in a way that rouse the faithful to action; they break open the hearts of the faithful and encourage them in the Christian life. As we prepare for the “Festival of Forgiveness,” boldly preach about God’s mercy and invite the faithful to experience this gift in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let your proclamation and living bear witness to Christ’s healing and compassion. When the Word of God takes root in the heart, it nudges us to seek the heart of Christ.

The Lenten season provides rich pericopes on which to preach. For example, parishes who have elect will be celebrating the scrutinies on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. When the scrutinies are celebrated, the readings are taken from Cycle A of the

*Lectionary*.<sup>4</sup> The three scrutinies provide an opportunity for the entire parish community to reflect on God's mercy and healing. The *RCIA* says, "[t]he scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful . . . [and] then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good."<sup>5</sup> The Gospels of the Woman at the Well, The Man Born Blind, and the Raising of Lazarus will provide rich fodder to engage the assembly in naming what is sinful not only in their own lives, but in the life of the parish and the life of the world. These three readings are intended to help the elect and the whole assembly, to prepare for the celebration of the Great Vigil.

Consider how your preaching might invigorate God's people as well as new opportunities for preaching (e.g. Evening Prayer, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament).

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<sup>4</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 146.

<sup>5</sup> *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 141.

## GUIDE FOR PENITENTS WHO DESIRE GOD'S MERCY

On the "Festival of Forgiveness" webpage, there is a pamphlet for penitents to lead them through the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The ritual and text in this guide is taken right from the *Rite of Penance*. Parishes are encouraged to download this resource, print them, and have them available for the festival. Below is the outline of the ritual as found in the pamphlet/worship aid.

### RITE FOR RECONCILIATION OF INDIVIDUAL PENITENTS

#### RECEPTION OF THE PENITENT

*The priest and the penitent make the sign of the cross.*

*The priest continues in these or similar words:*

**Priest:** May God . . . and trust in his mercy.

**Penitent:** Amen.

*Penitents who are unknown to the priest are advised to inform him of their state in life, the time of their last confession, their difficulties in leading the Christian life, and anything else that may help the confessor (Rite of Penance, 16).*

#### READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

*This is optional and omitted when celebrated in a communal service.*

#### CONFESSION OF SINS

#### AND ACCEPTANCE OF SATISFACTION

*The penitent says a general formula for confession.*

*This is omitted when recited during a communal celebration.*

*In these or similar words, the penitent continues:*

**Penitent:** 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,

*And, striking their breast, they say*  
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.

*As necessary, the priest helps the penitent to make an integral confession and gives the penitent suitable counsel. The priest then proposes a suitable act of penance, which the penitent accepts to make satisfaction for sin and to amend his or her life.*

*Suitable penance may include, service, works of mercy, prayer, fasting,*

## PRAYER OF THE PENITENT AND ABSOLUTION

*In these or similar words, the penitent expresses his or her sorrow. More options can be found in the Rite of Penance #85-92.*

**A** Penitent: My God,  
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong  
and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you  
whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help,  
to do penance, to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ  
suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy.

*or*

**B** Penitent: Lord Jesus, Son of God  
have mercy on me, a sinner.

*or*

**C** Penitent: Lord Jesus,  
you chose to be called the friend of sinners.  
By your saving death and resurrection  
free me from my sins.  
May your peace take root in my heart  
and bring forth a harvest  
of love, holiness, and truth.

*or*

**D** Penitent: Lord God,  
in your goodness have mercy on me:  
do not look on my sins,  
but take away all my guilt.  
Create in me a clean heart  
and renew within me an upright spirit.

*Then the priest extends his hands over the penitent's head and recites the prayer of absolution. The penitent responds: **Amen.***

## PROCLAMATION OF PRAISE OF GOD AND DISMISSAL

**Priest:** Give thanks to the Lord,  
for he is good.

**Penitent:** His mercy endures for ever.

*More options can be found in the Rite of Penance #93.*

**Priest:** The Lord has freed you from your sin.  
May he bring you safely to his kingdom in heaven.  
Glory to him forever.

**Penitent:** Amen.



Texts for the "Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents" is taken from the *Rite of Penance*,  
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For online users, you can [downloaded it here](#).

For all others, you can find it here: <http://visitor.stcdio.org/festival-of-forgiveness/>



## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The Examination of Conscience has an important role in the celebration of the sacrament. The examination is designed to help the faithful reflect on those areas of their heart that need God's healing and mercy. It is intended to facilitate reflection so that individuals and communities come to the celebration of the sacrament able to speak honestly about their lives. Many people struggle to identify and name what weighs heavy on their hearts. It is not easy to be vulnerable in the presence of God and admit to our brokenness. This tool can aid this process. Your parish may already use a well-composed examination or one of the several provided in the *Rite of Penance*.<sup>6</sup>

Here are two more options to use for the "Festival of Forgiveness, which can be downloaded from the website."

### LET US CONSIDER THE WAYS WE HAVE REVERENCED GOD.

- † Have I loved you, with all my heart and soul?
- † Have I inquired about your holy will in my regard?
- † Have I tried to keep your commandments?
- † Have I been faithful to personal prayer each day?
- † Have I been faithful to Sunday Mass?
- † Have I received Eucharist frequently, with faith and devotion?
- † Have I honored your blessed name in all I say and do?
- † Have I refrained from swearing, blasphemy, indecent language?
- † Have I taken your name in vain?
- † Have I trusted in you, at all times?

A

### LET US REFLECT ON THE WAYS WE HAVE PROCLAIMED GOD'S KINGDOM.

- † Have I shown kindness, respect, and understanding toward my neighbor?
- † Have I stolen or damaged goods belonging to another?
- † Have I made false claims, for things I had no right to get?
- † Have I been reckless about the life and safety of other people?
- † Have I harbored hatred for others?
- † Have I threatened the livelihood of others by unfair practices?
- † Have I taken the character of others, by detraction or plain slander?
- † Have I neglected to help the poor and needy?
- † Have I exploited sexuality, my own or others'?

### LET US REFLECT ON THE WAYS WE HAVE BEEN A CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO

<sup>6</sup> See *Appendix III* of the *Rite of Penance*.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>† Have I treated by family, friends, and community with proper respect and love?</li> <li>† Have I spent meaningful time with friends and family?</li> <li>† Have I avoided fornication, adultery, reckless behavior, immoral websites and publications?</li> <li>† Have I shared my gifts and resources honestly and openly with my community?</li> <li>† Have I been a loving brother or sister, friend, son or daughter?</li> <li>† Have I been a faithful witness to God’s mercy and love?</li> <li>† Have I been an example of gospel values to my friends and family?</li> <li>† Have I been grateful for those in my life who show me love and support?</li> <li>† Have I allowed the Holy Spirit to lead me to conversion of heart and mind?</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>† How have I extended love and respect to my family, my parents, my children, my nation?</li> <li>† Have I respected life from conception to natural death? Done no harm to anyone? What about anger or resentments or endangering others or myself?</li> <li>† Have I respected God’s gift of my sexuality? Reserved that gift’s full expression to marriage and been open to generating new life? What about thoughts about others? Or acting out with them or with myself? What about a general sense of respect for sexuality and reverence for this gift of God?</li> <li>† Have I respected the goods of others? Not taken anything nor damaged anything? Worked honestly and justly compensated those who worked for me? Upheld principles of justice?</li> <li>† Have I respected the truth by not lying and not damaging the reputation of others?</li> <li>† Have I been respectful of others and what they have in my thoughts or have lust, envy, or jealousy held a grip on me?</li> <li>† Have I cared for those in need through outreach and support? Have I been a merciful and compassionate presence in this world? Have I contributed to the common good of the society in which I live?</li> </ul>

### AN APPROPRIATE AND UNCOMPLICATED PENANCE<sup>7</sup>

A particular person’s story may suggest a specific behavioral penance or the praying of a particular passage of Sacred Scripture. Indeed, these may be appropriate penances, but it will be important for the confessor to be sensitive to the capacity of the penitent to

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<sup>7</sup> This section is taken from the materials prepared by the Archdiocese of Chicago and is used with permission. [http://jubileemercy.org/pdf/jubilee%20confessor%20guide\\_2.pdf](http://jubileemercy.org/pdf/jubilee%20confessor%20guide_2.pdf)

fulfill such a penance. A simple penance that can be readily understood and easily implemented may be the best. Some priests have asked for possible penances that they can offer penitents, something that might be a little more creative or specific to particular circumstances. Here are some possibilities.

1. For those who confess that they have difficulties with other people (anger, jealousy, envy, resentment, lust), a good penance might be to pray for those persons who trigger these feelings. Pray for them by name. Place them in God's hands. One spiritual writer says that when we pray for others, when we intentionally put them in God's hands, over time they will begin to appear differently to us. We will see them in a new way.
2. For those who confess involvement in pornography, a good penance might be to pray for those persons whom they have viewed and who have been exploited and whose personal human dignity has been diminished by their involvement in pornography. This prayer can help penitents to begin to see people differently, not as sexual objects but as created in the image and likeness of God.
3. For those who recognize their lack of concern for others, a lack of concern that may be accompanied by excessive self-absorption, a good penance would be to resolve each day to ask one or more persons how they are doing—not in a superficial way but with true attention and close listening. Sometimes, if we adjust our behavior in a certain direction, our general demeanor will shift as well. If we act more compassionately, we may well become more compassionate.
4. For those who know that they are dominated by an excessive desire to acquire material things, a good penance might be to take fifteen minutes to plan and decide how to be more generous with the good things the Lord has given them. In effect, this is an exercise in formation for stewardship.
5. For those who confess wasting time on the internet or misusing it, a good penance would be to go to the website of the Irish Jesuits for daily prayer ([www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)) and learn to use the internet for the greater glory of God.
6. For those who feel tepid in their spiritual lives and want to embrace discipleship of Jesus more steadfastly, suggest that they take some time and in one sitting slowly read through the whole gospel of Mark, which is the gospel of discipleship. Encourage the penitent to read the gospel with attention to the disciples: their call, their misunderstandings and fumbling, their willingness to take risks in following

Jesus, their participation in his mission, and their sharing in the mystery of his cross and resurrection. Alternately, in this Jubilee of Mercy, suggest that they read of the Gospel according to Luke.

7. For those who confess a profound sense of discouragement about life and/or their relationship with God, offer as a penance that they read slowly and pray over Romans 8. As they do so, they should recognize that God has loved them first with a love that cannot be broken. They should also recognize that they have within them the gift of the Holy Spirit, the consoler.
8. For those who have been away from the sacraments for a long time, a good penance is to invite them to an exercise of gratitude. Suggest that they find a quiet space and that they summon all the great and good gifts that God has placed in their lives beginning with the very gift of life itself. They should summon these gifts that include personal gifts, relationships, opportunities, faith, and even material blessings. As they recall each gift, they lift each one up to God in gratitude and with a prayer that they might assume responsibility for these gifts in their lives. If people begin in gratitude and truly understand what God has given them, their lives will take on a new shape.
9. For those who have felt distanced from God, weak in faith, and shallow in hope, ask them to take time to sit quietly before a crucifix. Ask them to let the Lord speak to them and let them know how much he loves them and how his cross is clear evidence of that love.
10. For those who confess problems with addictions in any form whether chemical or behavioral, suggest as a penance that they learn about 12-step recovery and, at least, consider this path as a way of being freed up from their addictions.

#### **DIFFICULT SITUATIONS: EXTERNAL FORUM**

For some who approach the Sacrament of Penance, their confession becomes a first step in a larger process of reconciliation in the Church. It may be that absolution cannot be given at the time of the confession but needs to be deferred until the penitent's situation in the Church is regularized. The most common case of this kind would be that of someone who was validly married, later civilly divorced, and then re-married civilly. Members of the Archdiocesan Tribunal as well as representatives of Family Life Ministries who offer support to those seeking and are in the process of obtaining annulments are all available. Proper referrals need to be made.

Other situations that require more extended dialogue might include those who publicly advocate a stance contrary to Church teaching, for example, concerning abortion, or those who are publicly engaged in an immoral and notorious enterprise, for example, drug dealing in the context of a gang. These cases require their own particular attention, and those involved need to make changes that reflect true repentance, a change of heart. Those approaching the sacrament of Penance in these difficult external forum situations need to be welcomed and encouraged. They need an explanation to help them understand the larger process of reconciliation. The priest-confessor should assure the penitent of ongoing accompaniment, which either he himself would provide or which would be available through the Church. Until matters are resolved and they can receive the Eucharist, the confessor should encourage the penitent to stay close to the Church, to seek whatever counsel is necessary, and to pray to God for help in public worship and private devotions.

#### **DIFFICULT SITUATIONS: INTERNAL FORUM**

In addition to the difficult external forum situations noted above, there are other difficult situations that remain in the internal forum, because there is no per se manifest public behavior that separates the penitents from communion with the Church. Generally, these difficult situations involve habitual or entrenched patterns of behavior at variance with the moral law but not known in a generally public way. Such a situation, for example, might involve attitudes and actions rooted in racism or prejudice directed to whole groups of people. Difficult family situations of resentments, feuds, and alienation are another example. Frequently, it is a matter of sexual morality, for example, contraception, pre-marital or extra-marital relations, homosexual activity, and addiction to pornography with accompanying masturbation.

For the confessor, these situations provide a significant challenge. He needs to summon God's help and to cultivate a prudential sense that combines a clear proclamation of moral truth with pastoral sensitivity in applying that truth. A series of steps suggest themselves.

1. **It is essential to begin with what God wants for all of us—the fullness of life.** It is also essential to communicate the gospel message that God “wants none of these little ones to be lost.” The good news we proclaim is not that we are without sin but that even when we were sinners God loved us and gave us his Son. We must begin, as the Gospel begins, with grace.
2. **A clear (and calm) communication to the penitents that their behavior is at variance with the moral law. This moral law, in the minds of so many, is roughly**

**equivalent to rules and regulations.** In fact, the moral law simply expresses the consequences and implications of a living relationship with the Lord. To communicate this sense of the moral law effectively, it is best to frame it in a positive way, e.g. in matters of sexuality, to communicate that in God's design the gift of human sexuality in its full range of physical expression is for married couples who are open to generating life and that any other behavior veers away from that design. At this point, the confessor helps the penitent to confront the gravity of the matter, which is another way of considering the implications for our living relationship with the Lord.

3. **If behavior is habitual (or even compulsive), the confessor helps penitents to understand their diminished (not extinguished) responsibility.** At this point, the confessor helps the penitent to confront the necessary freedom to commit a grave sin and to see how sin, in turn, diminishes human freedom.
4. **Mainly for the confessor's own reference, he may try to identify whether or not the penitent has/had sufficient *scientia aestimativa* (estimative or evaluative knowledge).** One may have a theoretical knowledge and understanding of the moral law without a grasp of how this applies to me here and now (estimative knowledge). The culture or environment or particular personal/religious formation (or lack thereof) can blunt a person's capacity to have this practical knowledge that connects the values of the moral law with the decision that lies before me. These subtle distinctions need not necessarily be communicated to a penitent. A confessor's understanding of the penitent's capacity or incapacity to have estimative knowledge can help to define whether or not the penitent needs further moral formation (e.g. through a pastoral counseling or spiritual direction resource). At this point, what is in play is the knowledge sufficient to commit a grave sin.
5. **The pastoral directives of the third part of *Humanae vitae* provide the confessor with a resource for these difficult situations that may include the question of contraception but other concerns as well that might cover a large range of practical moral dilemmas.**
  - a. Pope Paul VI speaks of the fundamental stance of the Church which is one that confessors ought to adopt as their own: The Church, in fact, cannot act differently toward men [and women] than did the Redeemer. She knows their weaknesses, she has compassion on the multitude, she welcomes sinners. But at the same time she cannot do otherwise than to teach the law. For it is in fact the

law of human life restored to its native truth and guided by the Spirit of God. (n. 19)

- b. He speaks of the Church's teaching and says, ... to many it will appear not merely difficult but even impossible to observe... (n. 20)
- c. In this context, it is important to remember that the moral law cannot be observed apart from God's grace. (n. 20)
- d. At the same time, human beings are called to the value of self-discipline, a way of cooperating with God's grace. (See n. 21)
- e. After an honest acknowledgement of the great difficulties that people can face in trying to be faithful to God's law (See n. 25), Paul VI calls them to pray, to stay with the Church, and to stay with the sacraments: Then let them implore the help of God with unremitting prayer and, most of all, draw grace and charity from that unfailing fount which is the Eucharist. If, however, sin still exercises its hold over them, they are not to lose heart. Rather must they, humble and persevering, have recourse to the mercy of God, abundantly bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance. Ultimately, they need confidence that God is drawing them forward to himself. (n. 25)
- f. Finally, the Holy Father speaks of the stance of Christian compassion that ought to mark the ministry of priests. The full text of n. 29 is cited with its references to married couples but with application to other situations as well: Now it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ; but this must always be joined with tolerance and charity, as Christ Himself showed in his conversations and dealings with men. For when he came, not to judge, but to save the world, was he not bitterly severe toward sin, but patient and abounding in mercy toward sinners? Husbands and wives, therefore, when deeply distressed by reason of the difficulties of their life, must find stamped in the heart and voice of their priest the likeness of the voice and the love of our Redeemer. So speak with full confidence, beloved sons, convinced that while the Holy Spirit of God is present to the magisterium proclaiming sound doctrine, he also illumines from within the hearts of the faithful and invites their assent. Teach married couples the necessary way of prayer and prepare them to approach more often with great faith the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. Let them never lose heart because of their weakness. In general, in these difficult situations confessors are called to be

honest with the Church's teaching and compassionate and sensitive in its application. They need to be committed to being sources of encouragement and formation as they assist the pilgrim people of God on their journey toward freedom from sin and its compulsions.

In general, in these difficult situations confessors are called to be honest with the Church's teaching and compassionate and sensitive in its application. They need to be committed to being sources of encouragement and formation as they assist the pilgrim people of God on their journey toward freedom from sin and its compulsions.

### **RESOURCE CONTACTS**

The following are offices and programs that priests may wish to recommend to penitents for further information and assistance.

Tribunal Office  
(320) 251-6557  
<http://tribunal.stcdio.org>

Office of Marriage and Family  
(320) 252-4721  
(800) 624-9019  
<http://omf.stcdio.org>

Office of Marriage and Family's pastoral response to pornography webpage (includes links to other resources)  
<http://omf.stcdio.org/pornography>

Project Rachel post-abortion outreach  
(320) 529-4616  
<http://omf.stcdio.org/respect-life/project-rachel/>

Natural Family Planning  
(320) 252-4721  
(800) 624-9019  
<http://omf.stcdio.org/natural-family-planning>



Courage (spiritual support group for persons with same-sex attractions)

(320) 252-4721

fiacourage1@gmail.com

<http://omf.stcdio.org/family-supportsexuality/courage>

EnCourage (spiritual support group for parents, siblings, children and other relatives and friends of persons who have same-sex attractions)

(320) 252-4721

<http://omf.stcdio.org/family-supportsexuality/encourage/>

Diocesan consultant for health care ethics

Father Thomas Knoblach

(320) 251-3764

## GATHERING FOR PRAYER

*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. (Acts 2:4)*

During the “Festival of Forgiveness,” the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered at each of the designated churches.

Since this is truly a *festival* of God’s mercy, the coordinating parish or parishes might also consider celebrating a communal Penitential Service,<sup>8</sup> a Liturgy of the Word, Evening Prayer, or a period of Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. A parish could even design a prayer using the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. If a site chooses to celebrate communally mercy with a prayer service, Reconciliation may still be celebrated.

Communal prayer is a powerful witness to the resurrection of Christ and invites the whole community to ponder the paschal mystery in one heart and mind.<sup>9</sup> Celebrating a non-sacramental, but liturgical service is a great opportunity for young children to participate as well as the catechumens and elect who have not yet been initiated into the Church. A communal gathering provides a strong witness for those in formation of God’s abundant mercy and the power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Communal prayer can include any of the following:

- Scripture dealing with mercy
- *Lectio* or *Visio Divina*
- Music (e.g. gathering, psalm)
- Prayer
- Intercession
- Communal Examination of Conscience

The Office of Worship is available for consultation as you prepare for the festival.

Besides the five samples (appropriate to Lent) in Appendix III of the *Rite of Penance*, you can find a sample worship aid of a Penitential Service on “Festival of Forgiveness” webpage.

<http://visitor.stcdio.org/festival-of-forgiveness/>

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<sup>8</sup> Found in Appendix III of the *Rite of Penance*.

<sup>9</sup> See the beginning of the *Rule of St. Augustine*.

## MUSIC RESOURCES

*Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts. (Ephesians 5:18b-19)*

Music is integral in the liturgy of the Church. When we gather in prayer to offer praise and thanksgiving to God, through Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we do so in word and song. St. Augustine says, “Singing is for the one who loves.”<sup>10</sup> “Music is therefore a sign of God’s love for us and of our love for him.”<sup>11</sup> Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, our hearts burn with the love of God when we open ourselves to his great mercy in word and sacrament. Music can lead us into deeper reflection on the paschal mystery. Music helps us prayer in times of sorrow and in times of joy. Consider using music as a tool for communal and individual prayer during the “Festival of Forgiveness.”

Here are just a few suggestions from the three major publishers (GIA, OCP, WLP):

Forgive our Sins	God is Forgiveness	Healer of our Every Ill
Hosea	In the Cross of Christ	Let Justice Roll Like a River
How Can I Keep from Singing	Restore in Us, O God	Return to God
How Can We Be Silent	Praise to You, O Christ, Our Savior	Remember Your Love
Like a Child Rests	The Lord is My Hope	Holy Darkness
Like a Shepherd	Merciful God	Make Us Turn to You
There is a Longing	We Shall Rise Again	Amazing Grace
There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy	Canticle of the Turning	Hold Us in Your Mercy
Turn to Me	Loving and Forgiving	O God, You Search Me
What Wondrous Love is This	Awake, O Sleeper	Change Our Hearts

<sup>10</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermo* 336, 1 (PL 1844-1855, 28, 1472).

<sup>11</sup> *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 2.

## PRAYER RESOURCES

*Have mercy on me, O God . . .*

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin! (Psalm 51:3-4)*

Jesus is truly the face of mercy and there is no better way to ponder God's gracious gift than to sit and meditate on God's word. Whether in private or in common, Scripture provides us with many stories that depict the Father's love and it invite us to recognize that love around us as well as in places we need to be the face of mercy for others. As you are preparing for the "Festival of Forgiveness," you might consider having some or all of the following passages (i.e. printed out or listed on cards and Bibles) available in the church. These passages might also be the focus of a prayer service.

### PARABLES OF MERCY

Here is a list of the Parables of Mercy from Luke's Gospel. You are encouraged to find other passages as well that fit the needs of your community.

The Two Debtors and Their Creditor	Luke 7:36-50
The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
Finding the Sheep and Lost Coin	Luke 15:1-10
The Merciful Father	Luke 15:11-32
The Rich Man and the Beggar Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31
The Judge and the Widow	Luke 18:1-8
The Pharisee and the Publican in the Temple	Luke 18:9-14

### THE PSALMS OF MERCY

Psalm 25

Psalm 41

Psalms 42 and 43

Psalm 51

Psalm 57

Psalm 92

Psalm 103

Psalm 119:81-88

Psalm 136

## **DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET**

The Chaplet of Mercy is recited using ordinary rosary beads of five decades. The Chaplet is preceded by two opening prayers from the Diary of Saint Faustina and followed by a closing prayer.

### **1. Make the Sign of the Cross**

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

### **2. Optional Opening Prayers**

You expired, Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fount of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us.

### **(Repeat three times)**

O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fountain of Mercy for us, I trust in You!

### **3. Our Father**

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, Amen.

### **4. Hail Mary**

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

### **5. The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; on the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

## **6. The Eternal Father**

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

## **7. On the Ten Small Beads of Each Decade**

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

## **8. Repeat for the remaining decades**

Saying the "Eternal Father" (6) on the "Our Father" bead and then 10 "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion" (7) on the following "Hail Mary" beads.

## **9. Conclude with Holy God (Repeat three times)**

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

## **10. Optional Closing Prayer**

Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion — inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself.

## **PRAYER OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE JUBILEE OF MERCY**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.  
Show us your face and we will be saved.  
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;  
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;  
made Peter weep after his betrayal,  
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.  
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,  
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:  
"If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with His anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### HOLY MARY, QUEEN AND MOTHER OF MERCY

During this Year of Mercy consider honoring Mary, the Mother of Mercy. The Roman Rite provides several texts for the liturgy. Masses in honor of Mary are traditionally celebrated on Saturdays when allowed by the liturgical norms (see the Diocesan Liturgical Calendar). The prayers and scripture passages listed here may be a resource for the “Festival of Forgiveness.”

The following texts are taken from the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary Volumes I and II* (Liturgical Press: Collegeville, 2012).

O God, who mercy is without measure,  
Through the prayers  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Mother of Mercy,  
Grant that we may know  
your loving kindness on earth  
and come at last to the glory of heaven.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever  
and ever. Amen.

All-holy Father,  
hear the prayers of your children,  
weighed down by our sinfulness,  
as we turn to you  
and call upon the merciful love  
that moved you to send your Son  
as Savior of the world  
and to enthrone holy Mary  
as the Queen of mercy.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever  
and ever. Amen.

- **The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Reconciliation**
  - 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
  - Psalm 103:1-4, 8-9, 13-14, 17-18a
  - John 19:25-27
  
- **Holy Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy (I)**
  - Esther C:12, 14-15, 25, 30
  - Response: Luke 1:46-55
  - John 2:1-11
  
- **Holy Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy (II)**
  - Ephesians 2:4-10
  - Psalm 103:1-4, 6, 8, 13, 17
  - Luke 1:39-55

#### ANCIENT HOMILY FOR HOLY SATURDAY

"What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled.

Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains, he who is God, and Adam's son.

The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: 'My Lord be with you all.' And Christ in reply says to Adam: 'And with your spirit.' And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

'I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise.

'I command you: Awake, sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person.



'For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form; that of slave; for you, I who am above the heavens came on earth and under the earth; for you, man, I became as a man without help, free among the dead; for you, who left a garden, I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden.

'Look at the spittle on my face, which I received because of you, in order to restore you to that first divine inbreathing at creation. See the blows on my cheeks, which I accepted in order to refashion your distorted form to my own image.

'See the scourging of my back, which I accepted in order to disperse the load of your sins which was laid upon your back. See my hands nailed to the tree for a good purpose, for you, who stretched out your hand to the tree for an evil one.

'I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side, for you, who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side healed the pain of your side; my sleep will release you from your sleep in Hades; my sword has checked the sword which was turned against you.

'But arise, let us go hence. The enemy brought you out of the land of paradise; I will reinstate you, no longer in paradise, but on the throne of heaven. I denied you the tree of life, which was a figure, but now I myself am united to you, I who am life. I posted the cherubim to guard you as they would slaves; now I make the cherubim worship you as they would God.

"The cherubim throne has been prepared, the bearers are ready and waiting, the bridal chamber is in order, the food is provided, the everlasting houses and rooms are in readiness; the treasures of good things have been opened; the kingdom of heaven has been prepared before the ages."

A reading from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday

#### **PRAYER**

Almighty, ever-living God, whose Only-begotten Son descended to the realm of the dead, and rose from there to glory, grant that your faithful people, who were buried with him in baptism, may, by his resurrection, obtain eternal life.

Through Christ our Lord.

*Prepared by Pontifical University Saint Thomas Aquinas*

For more information, please contact the Office of Worship.