

Pope's prayer intention for March: The sacrament of reconciliation

Pope Francis' prayer intention for March seeks to highlight the joy that the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** brings, and reminds us that it's a loving and merciful encounter between us and God.

The Pope Video for March has been published, with the prayer intention that Pope Francis is entrusting to the entire Catholic Church through the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

It's a message full of hope, in which he invites us to rediscover the power of personal renewal that the Sacrament of Confession has in our life. "Let us pray that we may experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the forgiveness and infinite mercy of God," Pope Francis asks. This month's video opens with the Pope himself going to confession, "in order to be healed, to heal my soul."

"Jesus waits for us, listens to us and forgives us"

"In the heart of God, we come before our mistakes," says the Holy Father in The Pope Video, highlighting once more the power God's love has over our being and action. Receiving this Sacrament isn't a matter of standing before a judge, but of going to a loving encounter with a Father who receives us and always forgives us.

"The centre of confession is not the sins we declare, but the divine love we receive, of which we are always in need," the Pope adds. And this love comes before all else, before our mistakes, the rules, judgments and failings.

Merciful priests

Fr. Frédéric Fornos, S.J., International Director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, pointed to Pope Francis' final words in the video: "Let us pray that God may give his Church merciful priests and not torturers."

And he added: "It's not the first time that the Pope prays for this grace. As a good shepherd, he knows the people's suffering, their sins, and their need to encounter 'ministers of mercy.' This is the time of mercy. In his apostolic letter *Misericordia et misera*, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, he invited priests to be like Jesus, full of compassion and patient. It's a path of conversion for each priest, to be 'witnesses of fatherly tenderness,' 'far-sighted in discerning,' and 'generous in dispensing God's forgiveness.' He asks that their heart be close to the heart of Jesus, and it's a grace."

In the Angelus on this past 14 February, the Holy Father asked that we thank and applaud merciful confessors. God never tires of forgiving. Let us pray, then, "that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the forgiveness and infinite mercy of God."



Henri Nouwen and Rembrandt's Prodigal Son

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

When I go to confession, it is in order to be healed, to heal my soul.
To leave with greater spiritual health. To pass from misery to mercy.
The center of confession is not the sins we declare, but the divine love we receive, of
which we are always in need.
The center of confession is Jesus who waits for us, who listens to us and forgives us.

Remember this: **In the heart of God, we come before our mistakes.**

And let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed
depth, to taste the forgiveness and infinite mercy of God. And let us pray that God may
give his Church merciful priests.

“Every saint has a past and every sinner a future”

St Augustine