

The Jubilee Year of Mercy: Contrition and Conversion

In his very first Angelus address, Pope Francis reminded us that God never gives up on us; he told us, “God understands us. He waits for us. He doesn’t get tired of forgiving us, if we repent and go to him with a truly open heart.”

Think about that: the Lord never gets tired of forgiving us! Sometimes, though, we get tired of asking for forgiveness, but we shouldn’t. God pursues us relentlessly with love and mercy. The Holy Father wrote this: “In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Luke 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.” (*Misericordiae Vultus* 9)

Such mercy on the part of the Father should empower us to undertake the journey of true conversion and contrition. Conversion means a turning around, a *metanoia* which involves a real change of direction, a complete reversal of a former way. It is conforming our life to Christ’s life more and more, so that more and more we live His life and allow His grace to grow in us.



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“We can only approach the Kingdom of Christ by *metanoia*. This is a profound change of the whole person by which we begin to consider, judge, and arrange our life according to the holiness and love of God, made manifest in his Son in the last days and given to us in abundance” (*Rite of Penance* 6).

There is nothing better than experiencing the new beginning God gives us when we reorient our life back toward Him. There is a real exhilaration that comes with changing our life and celebrating a return to Him. All this is made possible because of God’s mercy and forgiveness, but we must cooperate with His mercy through our sorrow (contrition), which aptly expressed in the Sacrament of Penance.

When we look over the actions of our life, and realize that we have sinned, and that we want to do better, we are experiencing contrition. That’s when God’s grace urges us to try to change the areas of our life that cause us to sin. Then, our conversion and reorientation back to God is

made complete by celebrating the Sacrament of Penance; without this sacrament, the grace-filled experience of truly expressing our contrition is lacking something real and tangible. We should never cheat ourselves out of the full experience of contrition and conversion by missing out on expressing our contrition in the Sacrament of Penance. ✕

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Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

415 Michigan Avenue NE, Suite 70 ✕ Washington, DC 20017 ✕ (202) 635-6990 ✕ www.fdlc.org