

# ELEVENTH 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD

March 8-9, 2024

«Walk in newness of life»

(Rom 6:4)

*Pastoral Resource*



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION  
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS  
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD

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## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Part I. Confession.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	1. Forgiveness Received - an opportunity to walk in a new life .....	9
	2. The Rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation .....	12
	3. Testimonies of Conversion by Kevin Matthews .....	14
	4. Testimony of Forgiveness by Gemma Capra Calabresi .....	15
<b>2.</b>	<b>Part II. Vigil .....</b>	<b>17</b>
	1. General Introduction.....	17
	2. Breakdown of the Vigil .....	19
	3. Exposition on Psalm 35, St. Augustine <i>Seeing the light of God</i> .....	24
	4. Lectio Divina on Romans 6:1-14 .....	26
	5. Pope Francis' Catechesis on Forgiveness.....	26



# Introduction

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“Walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) is the theme chosen by Pope Francis for this year’s 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD celebration. In the words of the Apostle one can hear the Holy Father’s affirmation in his Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera* reverberate “Mercy renews and redeems because it is the meeting of two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet the human heart. The latter is warmed and healed by the former. Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh (cf. Ezek 36:26) capable of love despite our sinfulness. I come to realize that I am truly a ‘new creation’ (Gal 6:15): I am loved, therefore I exist; I am forgiven, therefore I am reborn; I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy.” (No.16).

Forgiveness is love’s signature - its pinnacle. Each of us knows that we need to be forgiven and to become, in turn, an instrument of forgiveness for others. When one loves one acts so that the beloved can once again resume a life of communion, of a whole and perfect relationship. 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD testifies to precisely this.

This pastoral resource is intended to offer some suggestions to enable parishes and Christian communities to prepare to implement this initiative. These are, of course, suggestions that can be adapted according to local needs and customs.

On the evening of Friday, March 8, and throughout the entirety of Saturday, March 9, it would be meaningful to plan an event where the church is opened in a special way, offering the possibility of access to Confessions, preferably in a context of Eucharistic Adoration. As usual, the event could begin on Friday evening with a Liturgy of the Word to prepare the faithful for Confession, and conclude with the celebration of an anticipated Mass on Saturday afternoon.

The purpose of the event is to put the sacrament of reconciliation back at the center of the pastoral life of the Church, and consequently, of our communities, parishes, and all ecclesial realities. This is the centre of the Gospel message: the Mercy of God, which gives us the certainty that before the Lord no one will find a judge, but rather will find a father who welcomes him, consoles him and also shows him the way to renewal. Therefore, as Pope Francis stated: “Mercy gives rise to joy, because our hearts are opened to the hope of a new life.” (*Misericordia et misera*, No. 3).

✠ Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect for the Dicastery for Evangelization  
Section for the Fundamental Questions Regarding Evangelization in the World

*“What do you fear, O sinner, if you detest your sin? How will he condemn you, who died in order not to condemn you? How will he cast you from him, if you return to his feet, he who came from heaven to seek you at the very time you were flying from him?”*

(St. Thomas of Villanova)



«Walk in newness of life»

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**FORGIVENESS RECEIVED – A CHANCE TO WALK IN A NEW LIFE**

*“In this doom-laden time of war, hardship, loss and grief, there are two things at the heart of Christianity that are needed more than ever: hope and forgiveness.”*

(Timothy Radcliffe)

*“There are two things that cannot be separated: forgiveness granted and forgiveness received.”*

(Pope Francis)

**Is forgiveness out of style or indispensable oxygen for life?**

What is the relationship between forgiveness and hope? Is it still worth talking about forgiveness being given or received today? At first glance to the predominant mindset, the word “forgiveness” seems to be out of style. It seems to go against human logic, which is more prone to vengeance, revenge, and fatalism in the face of the power of evil or a suffered offense.

There are several types of people who have no attraction to the disposition or virtue of forgiveness. Some do not even want to hear about it. They do not feel the need for it at all. They do not feel the slightest guilt because they have already lost their sense of right and wrong. Their conscience is anesthetized or in a coma. The very notion of sin has been largely eclipsed even in Christian circles.

There are others for whom mercy and forgiveness represent a humiliation unworthy of human beings. They think it is a psychological weakness and only serves to increase the pathological feeling of guilt. Moreover, it is complicity with injustice and serves to excuse those who do evil. Then there are those who think their sin is so great that it can never be forgiven.

In a deeper and more compassionate outlook of faith on our humanity, so torn by the wounds of divisions, violence and conflicts resulting from hatred, from the hearts of many a groan or cry of need for forgiveness arises among human beings. What would our world, the relationships between people, starting with the closest ones within the family, be without the gift of forgiveness? This makes us realize that forgiveness is as indispensable to personal relationships and to society as oxygen is to the air we breathe. Otherwise we suffocate!

**The gift of God’s healing and restorative love**

In the light of Christian faith, the beauty, richness and true meaning of forgiveness can only be understood within the context of God’s love for every human being. Indeed, if we look only at the relationship between humans, forgiveness is not something spontaneous and natural. However, although difficult, it becomes a liberating experience when contemplated from God’s perspective. It can be experienced by a wounded heart because of the healing and restorative power of love. It has its primary source in God, who is merciful Love. It is not to be confused with a mere release of guilt or a legal act of amnesty. It is an act of free love. It cannot be earned or bought. As the psalmist prays, “[He] Who pardons all your sins, and heals all your ills ... Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger, abounding in mercy ... He has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our wrongs deserve.” (Ps 103: 3,8,10). Here we see how God’s forgiveness is a grace -- a gift of love in excess, beyond all human calculation and measurement. Only love converts the heart. God’s love is so powerful that it can bring forth good even from evil: “Though your sins be

like scarlet, they will become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool.” (Is 1:18)

Forgiveness has a restorative power, like a new beginning. Receiving it as God’s gift gives us an indescribable feeling, comparable to none other: the feeling of being loved in a unique and special way. Yes, we are loved to the very depths of our being, right where we do not deserve to be loved: in our sins, in our unfaithfulness and wickedness. Who deserves to be loved there? What is attractive about that? Only God is able to love us like that, forgiving. And all we can do is to let his gift penetrate our hearts.

### **Experiences of new life through forgiveness received through encounter with Jesus**

The pages of Sacred Scripture allow us to delve into the mystery of so many lives transformed by forgiveness, hearts pierced by God’s mercy that have seen new paths of life open up before them. The Gospels are full of experiences of forgiveness received in a free and remarkable way.

It is therefore necessary to lift up our eyes and hearts to Jesus to contemplate what divine forgiveness is, how it reaches our hearts, what its transforming power is, and how fruitful it is in the lives of those who receive it.

We see this especially in Jesus’ proclamation through parables. St. Luke, in chapter 15 of his Gospel, compiles three of Jesus’ parables about mercy that implicitly involve forgiveness: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son who returns to the Father’s house. It is God himself who always comes before us, who waits without giving up and goes out to meet the sinful man. He does

not rebuke him; he is not a ruthless examiner. He welcomes him with the affection of a Father, restores the filial relationship, makes it possible to live again in the dignity of a son.

Each of these parables ends with a tone of joy that comes to life in the shepherd’s sheepfold, among the woman’s friends and neighbors, and in the Father’s house. The joy of being found ends in a celebration of “music and dancing”: “we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found” (Lk 15:32). Indeed, it is a “death” that becomes a resurrection, a “missing” that turns into a joyful reunion.

Jesus’ encounters make forgiveness more visible in the concrete situations of people’s lives. The paralytic man healed by Jesus is an emblem of the forgiven man. The healing is seen as the sign of forgiveness: “Courage, child, your sins

are forgiven”; “rise and walk.” Jesus lifts him up from his failure and opens the possibility for him to walk through life again with hope (cf. Mt 9:1-8).

In the public sinner’s touching encounter with Jesus in the house of a Pharisee (Lk 7:36-50), the woman places herself at Jesus’ feet, soaks them with her tears and anoints them with perfume. She entrusts herself completely to Jesus with love and reverence. Jesus accepts her as she is, without condemning



her. He frees her from her condition of bondage and the merciless judgment of others. He tells her, “Your sins are forgiven,” and she can go in peace and rebuild her life with the love of forgiveness received. We see the same thing in the encounter with Zacchaeus (Lk 1:1-10).

Let us contemplate the adulterous woman’s encounter with Jesus a little more (Jn. 8:1-11). It is a dramatic scene, but at the same time one of incomparable beauty and moving tenderness that touches us and does not leave us indifferent.

The scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus an adulterous woman not to be saved, but to be stoned according to the law. She is alone, defenseless, exposed and humiliated before everyone with her sin, surrounded by her accusers. Not only has she publicly lost her honour, but she is about to lose her life. We can assume that her heart is throbbing with anxiety and longing: where can I find someone who will welcome me with my deep wounds? Where can I find someone who will speak a word of true deliverance to me?

Jesus, then, bends down to the ground before the woman and her accusers, as one who bends down over human frailty, symbolized by the dust of the earth on which Jesus writes, and takes it upon himself. Finally, he speaks the word of forgiveness, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? ... Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more.” (Jn 8:10-11). Just a few words are enough to change lives!

In fact, Jesus restored to the adulteress the lost beauty of her life: he saved her as a woman, in her dignity as a person, in her humanity, in her womanhood, in the truth of her spousal love, in the truth of her relationship with God and with others. A new life!

### **Fraternal forgiveness that disarms, heals, and reconciles hearts and relationships**

The gift of forgiveness we receive should also be given to those who wrong us. If received, it also enables us to walk in a new life. I recall the effect of the words of forgiveness of the son of the famous Italian judge Vittorio Bachelet, at his father’s funeral, which baffled and shocked the “*brigatisti rossi*” who had killed him. Here is the letter from a *brigatista*: “I realized that once the spring of forgiveness, the spring of free love, is unleashed, no one can stop it. It becomes a contagion, a light that lights up from glance to glance, from gesture to gesture, a chain reaction: this is the miracle I am witnessing today. I have this new awareness, that if I can transform my life, it will become a sign for others, and when they do the same, this sign will spread and reach many others still...!”

We summarize in the words of Pope Francis: “Forgiveness is the oxygen that purifies the air of hatred. Forgiveness is the antidote to the poisons of resentment, it is the way to defuse anger and heal so many maladies of the heart that contaminate society.” “Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope,” both to those who receive it and to those who offer it.

The richness and beauty of forgiveness we receive in the sacrament which captures the quintessence of forgiveness: the sacrament of reconciliation. At the heart of the celebration of this sacrament is not the confession of our sins. Rather, it is the celebration of God’s merciful love for each person and the gift of forgiveness. That is why it is not a torture, but a celebration of forgiveness for those who recognize themselves as humble sinners. Each person might ask himself or herself: do I really love this sacrament as a gift of God and his merciful love?

## THE RITE OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

### Preparing for Confession

Pope Francis' Meditation on the Examination of Conscience, in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, September 4, 2018 (from: L'Osservatore Romano, ed. quotidiana, 05/09/2018)

There are two spirits, two ways of thinking, of feeling, of acting: that which leads me to the Spirit of God, and that which leads me to the spirit of the world. And “this happens in our life: We all have these two “spirits,” we might say. There is the Spirit of God, which leads us to good works, to charity, to fraternity, to adore God, to know Jesus, to do many good works of charity, to pray, but there is also the other spirit, of the world, which leads us to vanity, pride, sufficiency, gossip – a completely different path.

Our heart, a saint once said, is like a “battlefield, a field of war where these two spirits struggle ... He called this a “spiritual battle”. In the Christian life, one must fight to find space for the Spirit of God, and to cast away - like Jesus expelled the demon - the spirit of the world.

I suggest a beautiful prayer that each of us can recite every day, before going to bed, looking back on the day” and asking ourselves “which spirit did I follow today? The spirit of God or the spirit of the world? This is what is meant by an examination of conscience: Feeling within our hearts what took place in this interior battle, and asking how I defended myself against the spirit of the world that

leads to vanity, ugliness, vice, to pride. How did I defend myself from real temptations?

This is to be done as a prayer, before going to bed, today, asking ourselves what kinds of feelings we had, identifying which spirit prompted us to which sentiments: the spirit of the world or the Spirit of God? If we are honest, we will often find that “today I was envious, I was greedy”. This is the spirit of the world.

We all face this interior battle, but if we do not understand how these two spirits work, how they act, we will be unable to move forward with the Spirit of God which helps us to understand Christ's thoughts, the meaning of Christ. We have this great gift, which is the Spirit of God, but we are weak, we are sinners, and we also have the temptation of the spirit of the world. In

this spiritual battle, in this war of the spirit, we must be victors like Jesus, but we must know the path to take. This is why an examination of conscience is so useful, to look back on the day in the evening and say, “Yes, I was tempted in this way today, I was victorious here, the Holy Spirit inspired me.” Essentially, it is about knowing what is going on in the heart.

### How to go to Confession: Individual Celebration of the Sacrament

*When you meet the priest for confession, he welcomes you warmly, offering words of encouragement. He makes the merciful Lord present.*

*Together with the priest you make the sign of the cross saying:*

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

*The priest helps you to place your trust in God, with these words or something similar:*

**The Lord be in your heart, that you may repent  
And humbly confess your sins.**

*Depending on the situation, the priest, reads or says from memory a text from Sacred Scripture, which speaks of God's mercy and His invitation to repent.*

**Rom 5: 8-9**

**But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.**

*Then, you can confess your sins. If need be, the priest will help you, asking pertinent questions and giving suitable advice. The priest will invite you to express repentance, reciting an act of contrition or some other similar prayer, for example:*



**Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. God, be merciful to me a sinner! (Lk 15: 18-19; 18,13)**

*Or*

**Thoroughly wash away my guilt; and from my sin cleanse me.  
For I know my transgressions; my sin is always before me. Ps 51: 4-5**

*Or*

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love.  
I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.  
Amen.**

*The priest extends his hands (or at least his right hand) over your head and says:*

**God, the Father of mercies, who has reconciled the world to himself through the death and resurrection of his Son, and sent the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit.**

*Response: Amen.*

*After absolution the priest continues: Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.*

*Response: His mercy endures forever.*

*Then the priest dismisses you saying: The Lord has forgiven you. Go in peace.*

### Conversion Testimony Kevin Matthews

Kevin Matthews was a well-known radio personality in Chicago. His unmistakable voice entertained ten million weekly listeners, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2008 he was diagnosed with a rare form of multiple sclerosis. At the same time his fame was fading (just as radio was fading as a



widespread medium) and he soon found himself out of work. A triple blow: the loss of his job, an incurable disease, and the loss of celebrity status. He was carrying all this on his shoulders when he had a life-changing moment.

One day, as he was getting out of his car to buy flowers at a store outside a cemetery near Chicago, he saw a large statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus, lying next to a dumpster. The statue was broken, fractured in half just below the waist, and Mary's hands were also broken. That abandoned statue was also full of dirt and dust from being exposed to the dumpster. At that point, Kevin thought, "Mary is broken. I am also broken."

Kevin picked up the statue and brought it home. Thus the story of the "Broken Mary" was born. He had the statue repaired, but he kept her broken hands and other "scars" as a reminder of his own fragility and the fragility within all of us.

Kevin credits Mary with bringing him back to the Catholic faith and changing his life. God's grace and Mary's blessing saved him from the despair he was experiencing.

He now tells his story to packed churches and takes the statue to churches, prisons, hospitals and other places, talking about Mary's love for God's children and encouraging people to pray the rosary. His message is simple: there is hope for the broken. In 2019, more than 1,500 people participated in a candlelight vigil with the image of the "Broken Mary" in Chicago, praying for peace.

Kevin's testimony is an account of his own conversion story: a conversion from being Catholic by name to being an enthusiastic promoter of devotion to Mary and, through her, of consecration to her Son. He himself said, "I guess I'm a Jesus freak now."

His story can be found in his book *Broken Mary: A Journey of Hope* (2017).

## Testimony of Forgiveness Gemma Capra Calabresi

*On May 17, 1972, a “Lotta Continua” commando killed Commissioner Luigi Calabresi, husband of Gemma Capra. She was 25 years old, with two small children and a third on the way.*

“That morning of May 17 after Don Sandro, the parish priest of San Pietro in Sala, told me that my husband had died, I collapsed on the couch - a sense of total devastation was upon me. I looked at the house, my belongings, and everything, all of a sudden, seemed meaningless. I fell onto that couch with excruciating, even physical pain in my bones. I don’t know how many hours I stayed there. Then suddenly I felt an absurd peace within me, an incredible inner strength. As if God had taken me in his arms. I sensed in ‘flashes’ that I was not alone, that I was going to make it. Then I said to Don Sandro, ‘Let’s recite a Hail Mary for the family of the murderer who must surely be in greater pain than I am.’

A strength that could not have come from me. It was the gift of faith, to me who until that day was Catholic more by family tradition. I went to Mass, I volunteered, but in that moment I felt loved more than I could have ever imagined. It was a most powerful enlightenment that has accompanied me throughout my life, especially in the most painful moments.

When I was discouraged and felt like I was hitting rock bottom, I would and still do refer back to that feeling. Inevitably that moment would come back to me and I would say to myself, ‘You know Gemma that God is there, He has come close to you.’ I learned firsthand that faith does not take away pain and suffering but fills them with meaning, gives them meaning, offers perspective.

The obituary chosen for my husband’s death was one of Jesus’ last words on the cross, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ If you realize, Jesus asks the Father to forgive his executioners. He, as a man, realizes that he cannot forgive right away. With those words, God showed the way forward. Immediately after Gigi’s murder, I felt lightened by the fact that God had forgiven right away in my place, and I was able to walk my path calmly. The Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Colombo, said at the funeral that the obituary was a flower laid on Gigi’s blood that would never wither and would bear fruit.

Forgiveness is a life choice. It has been a long, difficult journey with many setbacks. I have had dark years, full of weeping, discouragement, anger. I used to tell myself that, as a Christian, I had to forgive, but it was very difficult because I was reasoning. You don’t have to reason about forgiveness because I found that you only forgive with your heart and not with your head, reasoning, or intelligence. The word says it: for-giving. It is therefore a gift and you give it with love.

It is really an inner choice, and you can, it is difficult but you can, even after agonizing pain, still love life. Even after betrayal and slander, you can still believe in others and change your judgment about people you used to see as all the evil in the world.”



Note: This text is a collection of many interviews in which Gemma Capra Calabresi gave her testimony. Her full story can be found in her book, *La crepa e la luce* (2023).

*“How can charity last, unless God gives perseverance? How will the Lord give us perseverance, if we neglect to ask Him for it? And how shall we ask Him without prayer? Without prayer, there is not the communication with God which is necessary for the preservation of virtue.*

(Saint Alphonsus Liguori)



«Walk in newness of life»

(Rom 6:4)

### Introduction to the Celebration

The Vigil that takes place during the 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD plays a key role, because it is the main part of the entire event; so, it would be good if it could be celebrated with the Blessed Sacrament exposed, while one or more priests would be available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This Vigil is inspired by the words from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: “Walk in newness of life” (cf. 6:4), emphasizing that forgiveness received and given allows man to convert and change his life. An authentic rebirth, a new life!

The 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD event is closely linked with the liturgical season of Lent, and in particular with the Fourth Sunday of Lent, formerly known as “Laetare”. The joy celebrated during this Sunday flows from personal conversion, reconciliation with God and the grace received in the Sacrament of Forgiveness. Among other things, the Sunday readings (*2Cor 36:14-16.19-23; Ps 137; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21*) portray, among other things, how God’s grace acts in history, despite the sins committed by man. We note that God, rich in mercy, always and freely intervenes to save man, even if the latter is solely responsible for his own downfall with evil.

The event will take place in the days just before the Fourth Sunday of Lent to give all the faithful the opportunity to cleanse their souls of sins, and in this way, be prepared for Easter, which is now close at hand. During 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD, the topics indicated above should be emphasized. However, the planning and choice of themes and scriptural passages is always up to the discretion of the pastors and organizers who, in various parts of the world,

know the needs of the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care.



Reconciliation with God and man restores man to peace. Wars and peace are not merely a result of political dealings, but above all of the disposition of human hearts. In this sense every person, and moreover every Christian, is responsible for war and peace in societies and among nations. We all have the mission to cultivate merciful hearts and to spread the culture of forgiveness and peace. During the 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD initiative, prayer for peace and reconciliation among warring nations and social groups that are still in conflict cannot be overlooked.

As in previous years, the event usually takes place in three settings:

1. In small communities such as hospitals, prisons or parishes/ rectories with relatively low numbers of the faithful.

In this case the entire event often takes place on Friday evening. It could begin with the penitential liturgy, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with Eucharistic Adoration either silently or animated by a prayer group (according to the possibilities and needs of the community) followed by inviting everyone to sacramental reconciliation with God.

2. In larger parishes (especially in urban areas), prefectures (and/or vicariates/deaneries) or where it is decided to hold the event in several parishes/communities.

It would be good to begin on Friday evening with Holy Mass or the Liturgy of the Word. Then the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and Eucharistic Adoration begins, animated by various parish groups or by various parishes.

The organizers are responsible for planning the programme for Adoration and its duration, ensuring that there is ample time and priests available for the faithful to go to confession.

3. In cathedral churches, basilicas, sanctuaries, or in parishes and places of worship that are most significant for the local Church, carefully chosen by the Ordinary or those responsible.

The event should be organised in a more solemn manner, emphasising the universality of the Church that is celebrating it simultaneously throughout the world. The church should also remain open throughout the night, with Eucharistic Adoration animated in shifts by various prayer groups and communities. It would be good to have the Ordinary and the Bishops present at least at the beginning and end of the event, and if possible, also for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One or more priests should always be present and available to hear confessions.

If possible, a group of specially trained and prepared lay people could invite people passing by the church to come in and take part in the event (especially in churches located in city centres, historical and tourist areas, places with a large number of people, etc.). A simple invitation, a word of welcome or an explanation of the event often provide an opportunity to enter into much more serious conversation, thus becoming a real moment of evangelisation. Often, the lay faithful, especially those who have systematically received formation in various communities and prayer groups, can be excellent in helping the people prepare for confession, by talking with them especially those who have not attended church for some time and might feel uncomfortable about facing the priest directly.

Songs can be chosen to adapt the Vigil to the particular needs of a specific community (parish, hospital chapel, monastery, rectory, shrine, etc.). To develop the recurring themes of the biblical texts proposed, a meditation could be prepared or testimonies could be chosen, according to the needs and resources of the community itself.

## BEGINNING OF THE VIGIL PENITENTIAL LITURGY

The assembly sings a hymn or a suitable song while the priest and ministers process into the sanctuary.

### GREETING

C: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

R: Amen.

C: Mercy and peace be with all of you.

R: And with your spirit.

C: Brothers and sisters, today, too, the merciful Jesus addresses the word of forgiveness to us and invites us to conversion. Let us open our hearts so that God's grace may work in us. Let us entrust our sisters and brothers, especially those who have drifted away from God, that in these twenty-four hours dedicated to reconciliation in a special way throughout the Church, they may hear the voice of the Saviour who, taking us by the hand, invites each of us to "walk in newness of life".

Everyone is in silence for a few moments. Then the celebrant continues:

C: Let us pray.

Extending his hands and says:

O Father, who has freed us from sin  
And given us the dignity of adopted children,  
Look graciously upon your family,  
That all believers in Christ  
May receive true freedom and eternal inheritance.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who  
is God,  
And lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the  
Holy Spirit,  
For ever and ever.

All respond:

Amen.



## LITURGY OF THE WORD

**First Reading** ..... Is 43:16-21

A reading from the Book of the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord who opens a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who leads out chariots and horsemen, a powerful army, till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out, quenched like a wick. Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches, for I put water in the wilderness and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might recount my praise.

L: The Word of the Lord

R: Thanks be to God.

**Responsorial Psalm** ..... from Ps 103

**R.** Merciful and gracious is the LORD.

Bless the LORD, my soul;  
all my being, bless his holy name!

Bless the LORD, my soul;  
and do not forget all his gifts,

Who pardons all your sins,  
and heals all your ills,  
Who redeems your life from the pit,  
and crowns you with mercy and compassion.

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.  
He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,  
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve.

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our sins from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

**Gospel Acclamation** ..... JI 2:12-23

*Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!*

*Return to me with your whole heart, says the Lord,  
for I am merciful and gracious.*

*Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!*

## Gospel

C: The Lord be with you.

R: And with your spirit.

C: A reading from the Gospel according to John .....(7:53, 8:1-11)

R Glory to you, O Lord.

Then each went to his own house, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them.

Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders.

So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

C: The Word of the Lord.

R: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

## Homily.

All stand.



### GENERAL CONFESSION OF SINS

After a brief time for reflection, the celebrant says:

C: Trusting in the mercy of our Lord, who does not condemn us but always invites us to the life of grace, we confess our sins.

C: You were sent to heal the contrite of heart.

R: Lord, have mercy.

C: You came to call sinners.

R: Christ, have mercy.

C: You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us.

R: Lord, have mercy.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

C: Inspired by the Word of the Lord, which invites us to ask God for the forgiveness of our sins, we turn to Him united in prayer:

R: 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.

### SIGN OF PEACE

C: Dear brothers and sisters, reconciled by God's grace received through Jesus Christ, let us exchange a sign of peace.

All exchange a sign of peace.

## EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed as usual and is followed by animated Eucharistic Adoration which continues until the end of the 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD.

This is followed by time for individual confessions and absolution.

At the end of the Vigil, a solemn blessing with the Blessed Sacrament is given. In some places, especially where the event is solemnly celebrated, the 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD can conclude on Saturday evening with the celebration of Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Lent or First Vespers.

## CARRYING OUT THE VIGIL

This text is a proposal that should be subsequently implemented and adapted according to local traditions.

In consideration of the length of the vigil, the number of participants, organizational possibilities and other factors, the facilitation of Eucharistic Adoration could take place in shifts, with a thematic change after each hour.

During the celebration of the vigil, ample time should be allowed for silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

## EXAMPLE OF A TURN

After exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, there is a moment of silence, followed by the musical group leading a song. This is followed by a reading from scripture:

A reading from the Book of the prophet Isaiah.....(1:10, 16-20)

Hear the word of the Lord, princes of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, people of Gomorrah! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord:

Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool. If you are willing, and obey, you shall eat the good things of the land; But if you refuse and resist, you shall be eaten by the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken!

The Word of the Lord.

Everyone remains silent.

## TESTIMONY/MEDITATION

Next, a testimony of conversion is proposed. Such a testimony could be spoken by a person eager to share how the Lord has touched his or her heart with the grace of forgiveness. Alternatively, one could read the conversion testimony of Gemma Capra Calabresi or Kevin Matthews found in this pastoral resource. In case the testimony cannot be presented, a meditative text could be offered, such as:

**Exposition on Psalm 35, St. Augustine**  
*Seeing the light of God*

Therefore, Brethren of men, let us be children and let us trust under the shadow of His wings and be satiated with the fullness of His House. As I could, I have spoken; and as far as I can I see; and how far I see, I cannot speak. And of the torrent of Your Pleasure shall Thou give them to drink. A torrent we call water coming with a flood. There will be a flood of God's Mercy to overflow and inebriate those who now put their trust under the shadow of His wings. What is that Pleasure?

As it were a torrent inebriating the thirsty. Let him then who thirsts now, lay up hope: whoever thirsts now, let him have hope; when inebriated, he shall have possession: before he have possession, let him thirst in hope. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Mt 5:6).

With what fountain then will you be overflowed, and whence runs such a torrent of His Pleasure? "For with You," says he, "is the fountain of Life". What is the fountain of Life, but Christ? He came to you in the flesh, that He might bedew your thirsty lips: He will satisfy you trusting, who bedewed you thirsting. "For with You is the fountain of Life; in Your Light shall we see light" (Ps 35:9).

Here a fountain is one thing, light another: there not so. For that which is the Fountain, the same is also Light: and whatever you will you call It, for It is not what you call It: for you can not find a fit name: for It remains not in one name. If you should say, that It is Light only, it would be said to you, Then without cause am I told to hunger and thirst, for who is there that eats light? It is said to me plainly, directly, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mt 5:6, 8). If It is Light, my eyes must I prepare. Prepare also lips; for That which is Light is also a Fountain: a Fountain, because It satisfies the thirsty: Light, because It enlightens the blind. Here sometimes, light is in one place, a fountain in another. For sometimes fountains run even in darkness; and sometimes in the desert you suffer the sun, findest no fountain: here then can these two be separated: there you shall not be wearied, for there is a Fountain; there you shall not be darkened, for there is Light.

The testimony/meditation is followed by a song and then a time of silent prayer.  
An intercessory prayer can now be said by the whole assembly.



**PRAYER TO THE BLESSED MOTHER**

Immaculate Virgin!  
We come to you with hearts divided between hope and anguish.  
We need you, our Mother!  
But above all, we want to thank you,  
because in silence, which is your style, you watch over this city  
that today covers you with flowers to express their love.  
In silence, day and night, you watch over us:  
over families, with their joys and worries — you know them well;  
over study and work places; over institutions and public offices;  
over hospitals and nursing homes; over prisons; over those who live on the streets;  
over parishes and all the communities of the Church of Rome.  
Thank you for your discreet and constant presence  
that gives us comfort and hope.  
You know we need you, Mother,  
because you are the Immaculate Conception.  
Your person, the fact itself that you exist,  
reminds us that evil has neither the first nor the last word;  
that our destiny is not death but life,  
not hatred but fraternity, not conflict but harmony,  
not war but peace.  
Looking at you, we feel confirmed in this faith  
that is tested dearly by events.  
And you, Mother, turn your eyes of mercy  
on all the people oppressed by injustice and poverty,  
tried by war; plunged in a spiral of violence.  
And help us to embark on a path of education and purification,  
recognizing and countering the violence that lurks  
in our hearts and in our minds,  
asking God to deliver us from it.  
Show us once again, O Mother, the path of conversion,  
for there is no peace without pardon,  
and there is no pardon without repentance.  
The world changes if hearts change;  
and everyone must say: beginning with mine.  
But only God can change the human heart  
with his grace, the grace in which you, Mary,  
were immersed from the first instant.  
The grace of Jesus Christ, Our Lord,  
whom you generated in your flesh,  
who died and rose for us, and to whom you always direct us.  
He is salvation for every person, and for the world.  
Come, Lord Jesus!  
May your kingdom of love, justice and peace come!  
Amen.

(from Pope Francis' Prayer before the image of Salus Populi Romani, delivered December 8, 2023)

A hymn is sung and everyone prays silently until the end of the prayer time.

Depending on the length of the entire Vigil, this sequence can be repeated, changing the scripture passages and songs, and alternating testimonies, meditations, and prayers.

In view of the liturgical season of Lent, the Stations of the Cross, praying the Holy Rosary and/or the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy could also be included.

Other scriptural passages that could also be used during the vigil: Psalm 51 (psalm of repentance); Lk 6:27-38 (love for enemies – do not judge); Col 1:9-14 (from darkness to the light of Christ).

As an alternative, *Lectio divina* could be celebrated either individually or as a community. The following is suggested or Pope Francis' reflection on Forgiveness – found after the *Lectio*.

### **Lectio Divina on Rom 6:1-14**

We can and want to walk in a new life. Anyone who experiences the resurrection of Jesus as that which changes lives understands that it is possible to live in a new way. This is the challenge for all of us: to no longer live under the weight of habit but to begin a new road, the road that is taken when we bind ourselves to the love of the Lord. The new road passes through the greatest manifestation of this love: the Father raised Jesus, set him free from the bonds of death, and through him set us free from old habits, that is, from the sin that made us slaves of ourselves, of our “ego.” But there is no more room for sin when God’s grace, the Father’s mercy, comes to us and floods us like a river that makes our hearts fertile. And if sin tries to persist in us, we have the Spirit who defends us by bringing us back to the Gospel of Jesus and renewing our lives. The Spirit will not allow us to remain slaves to sin if it comes knocking at our door again, because Jesus, who died and rose again, has wiped out the power of evil and darkness in us forever. Paul says, “You are... under grace” (verse 14).

We take Romans 6:1-14 and read the passage carefully-twice is better than once. Immediately we notice that it speaks of the fact that our life is united with that of Jesus, the Christ (verses 1-5). Then we identify the effects and draw the consequences that flow from our union with him (verses 6-11 and 12-14, respectively). Put another way, the most relevant fact that we can experience in this world is to know Jesus and to cultivate a personal friendship with him, for it is through him that we come to know God, the Father. Jesus resembles the Father in everything, in the way he is, in the proposals he gives us, in behaviour and dispositions. Whoever knows the Son also knows the Father. On the other hand, anyone who learns to know how the Father and the Son act can embark on a life similar to that of Jesus.

Verses 1-5 show how the starting point is baptism, received or desired-perhaps some of you are not yet baptized but want to be. Paul is referring to the sacrament of new life, the immersion in water done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whereby we become Christians. The one who receives baptism goes through a death and a resurrection: when one immerses oneself in the water of the baptismal font or bows one’s head to receive the triple baptismal infusion, it is like a death, and when one resurfaces or raises one’s head, it is like a resurrection. Thus, as if it were a

second birth, the one who receives baptism reproduces in his life the death and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, baptism is being born again to the fullness of life that God gives us, so that we become in all things like Jesus, the Christ, who died and rose again. When we enter the world, we are born of father and mother, but through baptism we are reborn of God, through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, and so we become part of the Christian community, the holy Church of God.

The effects of baptism in us are immediate. We find them explained in verses 6-11. Here the image proposed by the apostle Paul is that of the old man. We were people subjected to our “ego,” we were old in body and spirit, and therefore sin was acting in us. We did not know how to get rid of everything that bound us and made us old, even though we were not that many years old. But then the Lord came to us, and the cross of Jesus caused us to change our ways. The old man we were, melted away thanks to the Lord Jesus, who, by dying on the cross, made us die to our “ego”.

The secret was identifying with Jesus’ death, participating in his death that made us die to a path marked by sin: indifference, laziness, arrogance, uncontrolled desire, violence, hatred, and forgetfulness of others, especially the poor. But by dying with Jesus we had life. There was redemption on Jesus’ side. We were in the pit of a meaningless life, only attentive to particular urges that never really shook our hearts. We were clay pots, pierced at the base, and the water flowed slowly and dissipated, and then we were left without spiritual energy, without strength to do good. But the risen Jesus made us die to death and taste life in him, for him and with him. Death has no power over him and therefore we are resurrected, without debt to death, but only to him, who has freed us from death and sin. Our reality is only this: we live “for God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11).

Well, if we live turned towards God united to Christ Jesus, it is impossible for sin to have any place in our hearts, minds, and actions. This is the final consequence that flows from the passage in verses 12-14. It is true that in a timely way sin can cause us to stumble, but we realize this right away and find the spiritual means to get out of the difficulty: more intense prayer, the sacrament of Reconciliation, the prayerful reading of the Word. The apostle Paul bluntly proclaims that “sin is not to have any power over you,” and adds, “you are not under the law but under grace” (v. 14). These are words of great significance: the grace of Jesus is stronger than the Law of Moses. Death and its squire, sin, cannot overcome the one who carries in himself the power of the Gospel. He who trusts in the Lord and the gift of his mercy, and does not doubt that he will be preserved from evil and sin, with all the desires that surround him. We need only to offer ourselves, as a community of faith and love, to God who raises the dead and causes us to walk in new life.

**Pope Francis' Catechesis on Forgiveness**  
**(Angelus, September 17, 2023)**

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the Gospel talks to us about forgiveness (cf. Mt 18:21-35). Peter asks Jesus: “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” (v. 21).

Seven, in the Bible, is a number that indicates completeness, and so Peter is very generous in the assumptions of his question. But Jesus goes further, and answers him: “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven” (v. 22). He tells him, that is, that when one forgives, one does not calculate; that it is good to forgive everything, and always! Just as God does with us, and as those who administer God’s justice are required to do: forgive always. I say this a lot to priests, to confessors: always forgive, as God forgives.

Jesus then illustrates this reality through a parable, which again has to do with numbers. A king, after being implored, forgives a servant the debt of 10,000 talents. It is an excessive, immense value, ranging from 200 to 500 tons of silver: excessive. It was an impossible debt to settle, even by working a lifetime: yet this master, who recalls our Father, forgives it out of sheer “pity” (v. 27). This is God’s heart: he always forgives, because God is compassionate. Let us not forget how God is: he is close, compassionate and tender. This is God’s way of being. Then, however, this servant, whose debt has been forgiven, shows no mercy towards a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii. This too is a substantial sum, equivalent to about three months’ wages — as if to say that forgiving each other costs [money]! — but not at all comparable to the previous figure that the master had forgiven.

Jesus’ message is clear: God forgives incalculably, exceeding all measure. This is how he is; He acts out of love, and gratuitously. God is not bought, God is free, he is all gratuitousness. We cannot repay him, but when we forgive a brother or a sister, we imitate him. Forgiving is not, therefore, a good deed that we can [choose to] do or not do; forgiving is a fundamental condition for those who are Christians. Every one of us, in fact, is “forgiven”: let us not forget this, we are forgiven, God gave his life for us, and in no way can we recompense him for his mercy, which he never withdraws from his heart. However, by corresponding to his gratuitousness, that is, by forgiving one another, we can bear witness to him, sowing new life around us. For outside of forgiveness there is no hope; outside of forgiveness there is no peace. Forgiveness is the oxygen that purifies the air of hatred. Forgiveness is the antidote to the poisons of resentment, it is the way to defuse anger and heal so many maladies of the heart that contaminate society.

Let us ask ourselves, then: do I believe I have received from God the gift of immense forgiveness? Do I feel the joy of knowing that he is always ready to forgive me when I fall, even when others do not, even when I am not even able to forgive myself? He forgives: do I believe that he forgives? And then: can I in turn forgive those who wrong me? In this respect, I would like to propose a little exercise to you: let us try, now, each one of us, to think of a person who has hurt us, and ask the Lord for the strength to forgive them. And let us forgive them out of love for the Lord: brothers and sisters, this will do us good; it will restore peace to our hearts.

May Mary, Mother of Mercy, help us to accept the grace of God and to forgive each other.

# ELEVENTH 24 HOURS FOR THE LORD

March 8-9, 2024

«Walk in newness of life»

(Rom 6:4)

*Pastoral Resource*



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION  
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS  
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