

XIII TWENTY-FOUR HOURS FOR THE LORD

“I have come to save the world” (Jn 12:47)

March 13-14, 2026

A Pastoral Aid

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Introductory Notes

*As has been the case every year, this pastoral aid seeks to offer some suggestions to enable parishes and Christian communities to prepare to live out the now traditional initiative **Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord**. These proposals can obviously be adapted to satisfy local needs and customs.*

On the evening of March 13 and for all of Saturday, March 14, it would be significant to plan on an extraordinary opening of the church, offering the chance to go to Confession, preferably in the context of a well-organized Eucharistic Adoration. The event could begin Friday night with a Penitential Liturgy to prepare the faithful for Confession and conclude with a celebration of Sunday's Holy Mass on Saturday afternoon.

*In the **first part** of this Pastoral Aid some thoughts are presented which help to reflect on the reasons for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The texts prepare people to experience the encounter with the priest during individual confession in a conscious way and also spur them to overcome the possible forms of resistance which often make their appearance so as to avoid Confession. Texts are provided which illustrate the path towards our own conversion and inspire us to carry out the works of mercy and continue our personal growth after receiving absolution from our sins.*

*The **second part** proposes an outline which may be used during the time churches remain open so that those coming for Confession may be assisted in prayer and meditation through orientations based on the Word of God.*

Part I

Confession

“You have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook sins for the sake of repentance. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for you would not fashion what you hate. But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Ruler and Lover of souls.”
(Wis 11:23-24, 26)

On Finding Motivation and Overcoming One's Own Fears Regarding Confession

From St. Augustine's *Homily 36 on the Medicine that Heals Us*

Let us invoke the witness of God

Against the accusations of men and the low insinuations of the human race, let us take God as our judge; let us choose Him, brethren, as our witness. He who is judge does not disdain to be a witness; he does not gain promotion by becoming judge, for, being now a witness, he will also be judge. He is a witness because he needs no one else to know who you are. He is a judge because he has the power to give death and grant life, to condemn and absolve, to cast into hell and lift up to heaven, to send us to the devil and crown us with the angels. Having this power, he is judge. But since to know you he needs no testimony, he who will then judge you now sees you. You cannot deceive him when he sets himself to judge you. You cannot call upon false witnesses to deceive that judge when he sets himself to judge you. God says to you: when you despised me, I saw; and when you refused to believe, you did not escape my judgment: I delayed, but I did not annul it. You did not wish to listen to what I commanded; you will suffer what I foretold. But if you will listen to what I command, you will not have to suffer the evils foretold, but you will receive the promised goods.

One should not be troubled by the phrase: *My judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent me*, while elsewhere it is said: *The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son* (John 5:22). We have already discussed these words of the Gospel, and now we simply remind you that they do not at all mean that the Father will not be with the Son in judging, but they mean that to the good and the wicked, summoned for judgment, only the Son will appear—in the form in which he suffered, rose, and ascended into heaven, according to the announcement given by the angels to the disciples who watched his ascension: *He will come in the same way you have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11); that is, he will come to judge in that human form in which he was judged, so that the prophecy may be fulfilled: *They will look on him whom they have pierced* (Zech 12:10). But if we go with the righteous to eternal life, we will see him as he is, and then this will not be the judgment of the living and the dead, but only the reward of the living.

Nor should the phrase “*In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true*” cause difficulty, as if one might think that this was not God's law, because it says “in your law” rather than “in the law of God.” Know that he said *in your law* as if to say: in the law that was given to you. And by whom was it given, if not by God? In the same way that we say *Give us this day our daily bread* (Mt 6:11).

WHY SHOULD I GO TO CONFESSION?

In response to this question, a text by Pope Benedict XVI and the testimony of Olivia Hurst are proposed.

Benedict XVI, *Replies to the Questions of Inmates at Rebibbia*, December 18, 2011

That is a big issue.

Two reasons in particular. First, of course, if I get on my knees and with true love ask God to forgive me, He forgives me. It is the permanent doctrine of the Church that if believers, with true repentance—that is, not only to avoid suffering and hardship, but out of love for goodness and out of love for God—ask for forgiveness, they receive forgiveness from God. Consequently, if I really acknowledge that I have done wrong and in me love for good and the will to do good are reborn, then He grants me repentance over not having acted according to this love, along with my request for God’s forgiveness.

There is also a second reason. Sin is not only a “personal,” individual matter between God and me. Sin always has a social, horizontal dimension. With my personal sin I have also damaged the communion of the Church. I have tarnished humanity, even if perhaps no one knows. And this social, horizontal dimension of sin requires that it be absolved on the level of the human community, too, the community of the Church, almost bodily. This second dimension of sin, which is not only against God, but concerns the community as well, thus demands the Sacrament. This Sacrament is the great gift in which, by confession, I can free myself from this fault and truly receive forgiveness, also in the sense of being fully readmitted into the community of the living Church, the Body of Christ. And, consequently, in this sense, absolution by the priest is necessary. The Sacrament is not an imposition which limits God’s goodness, but, on the contrary, an expression of the goodness of God because it demonstrates to me that concretely, too, in the communion of the Church, I have received forgiveness and can begin again.

I would thus say we should bear in mind these two dimensions: the vertical one, with God, and the horizontal one, with the community of the Church and humanity. The priest’s absolution is necessary to absolve me truly from this bond and reintegrate me completely, in God’s perspective, into his Church, and give me certainty, which is almost bodily, too, sacramental: God forgives me and receives me into the community of his children. I think we must learn to understand the Sacrament of Reconciliation in this sense: a chance to find, almost bodily, the goodness of the Lord, the certainty of reconciliation.

Testimony on the Power of Reconciliation by Olivia Hurst

“Everyone, face forward against the wall and stay quiet. This will all be over soon.” As we waited in line with sweaty hands and nervous brows, we tried to remember the procedure and pray that the person in front of us would take a little bit longer. One by one, children entered the tiny room until suddenly I was at the head of the line, waiting for my teacher to give me the cue that it was my turn. Once I got the signal, I slowly made my way to the door with the little green light above it, believing that this could very well be the end. If you could not tell, I was a bit of a dramatic second grader! My first reconciliation was with my Catechism class before my first Communion. Everyone was extremely nervous because our priest was an intimidating man, so no one wanted to be the first one to declare their sins to him. The bravest person always went first. After what seemed like an eternity in the confessional, he came out and told the rest of us that it was not nearly as bad as we imagined. He was right; sure, I was still nervous to approach a room to lay out my sins to a man I barely knew, but it wasn't as painful as my vivid eight-year-old brain imagined. I didn't know it at the time, but soon I would not only lose my fear of confession, I would also look forward to the sacrament.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers those seeking God's mercy and forgiveness the opportunity to go to Him with the knowledge that He loves us and wants to forgive us. Reconciliation is the recognition and acceptance of God's divine mercy. It is a place to go heal wounds of your soul. Jesus said to Saint Maria Faustina, “Tell me about everything, be sincere in dealing with Me, reveal all the wounds of your heart. I will heal them...” We all have wounds in our lives that we need mended. We all have struggles in our lives that we must endure, and we don't always win. It is in our imperfect human nature that we fall down sometimes. All we have to do in these difficult times is seek the council of God for comfort and understanding through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One of the greatest gifts the Father has given us is that of forgiveness through this sacrament. Attending reconciliation shows a willingness and desire to receive the love of God in its fullest, most merciful way. For me, reconciliation has become a lifeline to keep me connected to the Father. As a recently graduated senior of high school, I am surrounded by temptation that tries to lead me astray. Sometimes I fall victim to temptation, just as we all do, but I have comfort knowing that in my weakness I can turn to the Father to look for strength and healing in reconciliation.

The time before confession is full of tension because of the weight of sins and burdens between you and God. It's almost like a fight with a friend. You want nothing more than to resolve the issue and be free from the tension that is between you, but you are scared that your friend might not want to forgive you to resolve the issue. Being in a state of sin is similar to this, except you are not in a fight with God, but with yourself. This internal fight is a constant battle for us to reach a state of grace that we cannot possibly have without Christ and His mercy. Participating in reconciliation is like resolving the issue; once you bring your sins and burdens to Him, you feel free. This freedom is not the ability to do anything you wish with no consequences, but rather freedom from the burden of sin. To me, this freedom feels like flying, knowing that He forgave me even with all my imperfections. It is okay that I am human and make mistakes because I know that God will always be there to offer forgiveness.

For me, confession feels like the warm embrace of a parent soothing a hurt, lost child. He is telling me that He wants to help me and be there for me. He says that I can trust Him because He loves me. There is no condemnation in this embrace, only love. No matter what I have done, the Father will never turn His back on me. He does not condemn us for our humanity. He wants us to be free of our sinfulness. All I have to do to receive this freedom is to open my heart to His healing. Ultimately, reconciliation is not about you and your mistakes, but about Him and His Divine Mercy.

Over the years, I've found that the best way to prepare for confession is to sit in silence, preferably in adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament, asking God to prepare me to receive his grace and forgiveness. In reflection, I do an examination of conscience rooted in the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes to help me remember my past sins. A priest once told me that reconciliation is not about the priest but about the person confessing and God's mercy, that works through the priest hearing the confession. It was this knowledge that gave me courage to attend confession when I was afraid and still gives me comfort today.

After confession, I want to stay in the state of grace where I am on good terms with God, but I also want to share this feeling and experience with others. I want to show people how good reconciliation is. For most people, confession is intimidating and daunting because no one wants to say what they have done; it is normal to want to keep those things bottled up. What helps me is to look at the stations of the Cross. Jesus falls three times under the weight of the cross, and we fall even more under the burden of our sins. Confession is releasing that burden, knowing that freedom from sin and the feeling of flying comes from reconciliation with the Father. The ultimate state of grace makes it all worth it.

Nearly a decade after my first reconciliation, I am amazed by the unending forgiveness of God. As a small child I was intimidated by my priest, and now as a young adult I see how confession itself is an intimidating sacrament because it challenges our human nature to keep our misgivings bottled up. Despite this, we can approach the confessional confident that in our mistakes we can find healing. I am comforted by the knowledge that He will continue to free me from the burden of sin. Each day Christ invites us to accept his council, "So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help" (Heb 4:16). No sin is greater than God's mercy. God will forgive us as long as we ask Him, so let us seek his mercy with a heart open to his limitless love.

THE RITE OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Preparing for Confession

*Meditation by Pope Francis on the **Examination of Conscience**, in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, September 4, 2018 (from L'Osservatore Romano, daily edition, 05/09/2018)*

There are two spirits, two ways of thinking, feeling, and acting: one that leads me to the Spirit of God and one that leads me to the spirit of the world. And this happens in our lives: we all have these two “spirits,” so to speak. There is the Spirit of God, which leads us to good works, charity, fraternity, to adore God, to know Jesus, to perform many charitable acts, to pray.

But there is also the other spirit, the spirit of the world, which leads us toward vanity, pride, self-sufficiency, gossip—an entirely different path. Our heart, as a saint once said, is like a “battlefield,” a war zone where these two spirits fight. This is the “spiritual combat.”

In the Christian life, one must fight to make room for the Spirit of God and drive out the spirit of the world. I suggest a beautiful prayer that we can all do every day, before going to bed: to look back on the day and ask ourselves: which spirit did I follow today? The Spirit of God or the spirit of the world?

This is called the examination of conscience: feeling in the heart what happened in this inner war, and how I defended myself against the spirit of the world that leads me to vanity, low things, vices, pride, and all that. How did I defend myself against concrete temptations? This is done as a prayer, before going to bed, today: what feelings did I experience? Identify which spirit prompted me to that feeling, inspired that feeling: is it the spirit of the world or the Spirit of God?

Many times, if we are honest, we will find that “today I was envious, I was greedy, I did this.” That is the spirit of the world. It is true: we all have this struggle within us, but if we do not understand how these two spirits function, how they act, we cannot move forward with the Spirit of God that leads us to know the mind of Christ, the sense of Christ.

We have this great gift, which is the Spirit of God, but we are fragile, we are sinners, and we also have the temptation of the spirit of the world. In this spiritual combat, in this war of the spirit, we must be victors like Jesus, but it is necessary to know which path we are walking.

For this reason, the examination of conscience is so useful: to review the day in the evening and say: “Yes, today I was tempted here, I overcame here, the Holy Spirit gave me this inspiration.” In short, it is about knowing what happens in the heart.

How Should I Make a Confession?

When you approach as a penitent, the priest cordially welcomes you with words of encouragement. He renders the merciful Lord present. Together with the priest, make the sign of the cross, saying,

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

The priest helps you to open yourself to trust in God with these or similar words:

May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy.

The priest, as circumstances permit, either reads or says from memory a text from Sacred Scripture speaking of the mercy of God and calling us to conversion.

Mt 6:14-15

**If you forgive others for their failings,
your Heavenly Father will also forgive you;
but if you do not forgive others,
neither will your Father forgive your failings.**

At this point you may confess your sins. If necessary, the priest helps you with questions and suitable advice. The priest invites the penitent to manifest repentance by reciting the Act of Contrition or another similar formula:

O my God, I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to amend my life, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen.

Or

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Or

***Lord, remember your love,
your faithfulness enduring forever.***

***Do not bear in mind my sins:
remember me in your mercy,
for the sake of your goodness, Lord. (Ps 24:6-7)***

The priest, placing his hands (or at least his right hand) upon the head of the penitent, says,

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son,

**has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us
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 Holy Spirit.**

You respond: **Amen.**

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

You respond: **His mercy endures forever.**

The priest then takes leave of you, saying: **The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.**

TESTIMONY OF CONVERSION

Miguel Vera

My name is Miguel, I am 34 years old, and I come from Asunción, Paraguay. There are eleven of us in my family, and I am the only one who had problems with drugs. I overcame my addiction at the “Fazenda da Esperança San Rafael” (House of Hope Saint Raphael) in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

I used drugs for 16 years, starting when I was 11. I always had difficulties in my relationships with my family because I didn't feel loved or understood by my parents. We always argued, and the relationships among us were always very tense. I don't remember ever sitting at the table for dinner with my family. For me, family was a non-existent concept. My home was just a place to sleep and eat.

At the age of 11, I ran away from home because the emptiness inside me was too great. I continued studying but wanted “freedom.” Soon, within a couple of months, I tried drugs for the first time on the street that led to my school. This only deepened the emptiness in me: I didn't want to return home, face my family, face myself. Later, I abandoned my studies, and my parents left me outside the house because they had lost all hope.

At the age of 15, I committed a crime for which I went to prison. My father came to visit me once in prison and asked if I wanted to change, and I said yes. As soon as I was released, I committed another crime. One day I committed a crime and was incarcerated again, this time for six years, during which I suffered greatly. I couldn't understand why none of my brothers or sisters ever came to visit me. The years passed, and I served my sentence. My parents were always very close to the Church.

One month after my release, a priest who was a family friend invited me to visit a place called “Fazenda da Esperança” (House of Hope). I had no purpose in life. All those lost years were clearly visible in my eyes, on my face. I agreed to go, and from my first visit, I understood what it meant to have a family. At first, relationships and community life were very difficult for me. In this community, the healing process took place through the Word of God, by living the Word.

During this healing process, I had a roommate whom I initially could not forgive. I needed peace, but he needed love. During the seven months I spent in that place, I was assigned to improve the management of the house. Thanks to this responsibility, I realized that God wanted something from me.

One day, my roommate received a letter from his wife. Their relationship was not very good. This helped me understand him better. I handed him the letter, and he asked me, “Brother, can you forgive me?” I replied, “Yes, of course.” From that moment, our relationship became excellent. God truly transformed us. HE makes us reborn!

I fully recovered ten years ago. For the past three years, I have been in charge of the “Quo Vadis?” house at the House of Hope in Cerro Chato.

(Testimony given on the occasion of World Youth Day in Kraków, 2016)

Part II

Vigil

"Adoration is essentially an embrace with Jesus in which I say to him: "I am yours, and I ask you, please stay with me always." (Benedict XVI, Catechetical Meeting of the Holy Father with Children who had Received their First Communion during the Year, October 15, 2005)

Introduction

The Vigil which takes place during *Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord* plays a fundamental role, for it characterizes the whole event. It is desirable for the Vigil to take place with the Exposure of the Most Blessed Sacrament while one or more priests remain available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This Vigil is inspired by the words Jesus addressed to the adulteress: “Nor do I condemn you,” stressing freely-granted forgiveness, even though the woman’s sin was evident. The whole passage, where John the Apostle describes the encounter taking place between Jesus and the adulteress, leaves room for numerous reflections. Two aspects are dwelt upon here: the first points to the forgiveness which Jesus is willing to grant each person, no matter what sin has been committed; the second is an invitation to follow the Master of forgiveness and pardon the sins of those who have sinned against us.

The *Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord* event is strictly linked to liturgical time—that is, to the Fourth Sunday of Lent. The joy celebrated on this Sunday, which in former times was called *Laetare* (‘rejoice’), flows from personal conversion, reconciliation with God, and the grace received in the Sacrament of Forgiveness. The Sunday readings (Jos 5:9, 10-12; Ps 33; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32) stress the power of forgiveness and the grace of the promised land, concentrating on the story of the prodigal son. The initiative has been placed precisely in the days preceding the Fourth Sunday of Lent to give all the faithful the chance to be reconciled with God and in this way to prepare for Easter, which is nearly at hand.

While the *Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord* event is taking place, it is appropriate to highlight the aforementioned content. The unfolding of the initiative itself and the choice of themes and biblical passages are, however, always left to the discretion of pastors and other organizers, who, in different parts of the world, are more familiar with the needs of the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care.

Experience from previous years indicates that the event usually unfolds in three modalities.

1. In small communities, such as hospitals or parishes/rectorates, with a relatively reduced number of the faithful. In this case the whole event often takes place on Friday evening.

It could begin with the Penitential Liturgy, followed by Exposure of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and, during Eucharistic Adoration, either in silence or accompanied by a prayer group (in keeping with the possibilities and needs of the community), all are invited to sacramental reconciliation with God.

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

It would be appropriate to begin on Friday evening with Holy Mass or a Liturgy of the Word. Then there is Exposure of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic Adoration begins, accompanied by

different groups from the parish or by several parishes. Those responsible establish both the whole program for Adoration and its duration, ensuring turns or shifts for Confession by the faithful.

3. In cathedral churches, basilicas, sanctuaries, or parishes and places of worship which are more significant for the local Church and have been carefully selected by the Ordinary or by those responsible.

The event should be organized in more solemn fashion, stressing the universality of the Church celebrating it at the same time all over the world. The church should remain open at night, too, with Eucharistic Adoration accompanied by various prayer groups and communities, taking turns. It is desirable for the Ordinary and the Bishops to be present, at least at the beginning and the end of the event, and to be available for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The constant presence of one or more priests prepared to hear confessions must be ensured.

Whenever possible, a group of the faithful who have been appropriately instructed and prepared could invite the people passing by near the church to enter and take part in the event (especially in centrally-located churches in cities, in downtown areas and those frequented by tourists, or wherever there are large crowds). A simple invitation, a word of welcome, or an explanation of the event often provide the occasion for a much more serious conversation which becomes a real moment for evangelization. Lay persons, particularly those who systematically receive formation in different communities and prayer groups, can frequently provide excellent service in preparation for Confession, dialoguing with people who have not been to church for some time and might feel uncomfortable in direct, immediate contact with a priest.

To adapt the proposal of the Vigil to the special needs of a particular community (parish, hospital chapel, monastery, rectorate, sanctuary, etc.) songs could be selected. For closer examination of the subjects recurring in the biblical texts proposed, preparing a meditation is suggested or choosing some testimonies in keeping with the needs and possibilities of the community itself.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE VIGIL PENITENTIAL LITURGY

While the priest and ministers proceed towards the presbytery, the assembly sings the hymn or another suitable song.

GREETING AND MONITION

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

R: Amen.

C: May mercy and peace be with you all.

R: And with your spirit.

C: Brothers and sisters, today, too, Jesus in his mercy addresses words of forgiveness to us and invites us to conversion. Let us open our hearts so that the grace of God may work in us. Let us entrust our sisters and our brothers to him, especially those who have drifted away from God, so that, in these twenty-four hours especially devoted, in the whole Church, to reconciliation, they may hear the voice of the Savior: “Nor do I condemn you; go and from now on sin no more.”

All pause to gather their thoughts in silent prayer.

C: O God, Father who are good and great in forgiveness, welcome into the embrace of your love all the sons and daughters who return to you in a spirit of repentance; dress them in the splendid robes of salvation so that they may taste your joy at the Paschal Supper of the Lamb. He is God and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading Is 43:16-21

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord,
who opened a way through the sea,
a path in the midst of mighty
waters, who led out chariots and
horses,
along with an army of valiant troops;
they lie in death and will rise no more,
snuffed out like a wick, extinguished:
“Remember past events no longer,
think no more about what happened before.
Behold, I am doing something new:
It is budding forth right now, can’t you see?
I shall make a road even in the desert,
and place rivers on barren plains.
The wild animals will glorify me,
jackals and ostriches,

for providing water in the desert, rivers in the wastelands,
to quench the thirst of my people, my chosen one.
The people I have shaped for myself
will sing my praises.”

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (from Ps 102)

R: *The Lord is good and great in love.*

Bless the Lord, my soul.
Let everything in me bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, my soul.
Do not forget all the good he has done.

He forgives all your sins,
heals all your infirmities,
saves your life from the grave,
surrounds you with goodness and mercy.

Merciful and compassionate is the Lord,
slow to anger and great in love.
He does not treat us according to our sins
or repay us as our failings deserve.

As the distance from east to west,
so far does he separate our faults from us.
As a father shows tenderness to his children,
so the Lord is tender with those who fear him.

Gospel Acclamation (Cf. Jl 2:12-13)

Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus!

Come back to me with all your heart, says the Lord,
for I am merciful and compassionate.

Praise and honor to you, Lord Jesus!

Gospel

C: The Lord be with you.

R: And with your spirit.

C: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (8:1-11)

R: Glory to you, Lord.

At that time 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. And 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 that 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. Jesus was thus 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, "Nor do I condemn you. Go and from now on sin no more."

C: The Gospel of the Lord.

R: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The homily follows.

GENERAL CONFESSION OF SINS

Following a brief pause for reflection after the homily, the celebrant says:

C: Trusting in the mercy of our Lord, who does not condemn us, but always exhorts us to lead a life of grace, let us confess our sins.

C: Lord, sent by the Father to save the contrite of heart, have mercy on us.

R: *Lord, have mercy.*

C: Christ, who came to call sinners, have mercy on us.

R: *Lord, have mercy.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

All rise to their feet.

C: And we now pray together to the Father so that he will forgive us our sins:

R: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by 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, prompted by the words of Jesus, who wishes to forgive our sins if we forgive those who have sinned against us, as a sign of mutual forgiveness, let us offer one another a gesture of reconciliation and peace.

All exchange a sign of peace.

The Exposure of the Most Blessed Sacrament follows in the usual manner, along with Eucharistic Adoration, accompanied according to the provisions made, which will last until the conclusion of *Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord*.

This is the time for confessions and individual absolution.

At the end of the Vigil there is a solemn blessing with the Most Blessed Sacrament. In some places, especially where the *Twenty-Four Hours for the Lord* initiative has been carried out in solemn fashion and concludes Saturday evening, the Holy Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Lent could be celebrated at that time, or First Vespers.

THE UNFOLDING OF THE VIGIL

This text is a proposal which should later be rendered more concrete and inculturated in keeping with local traditions.

In view of the duration of the vigil, the number of participants, organizational possibilities, and other factors, the accompaniment of Eucharistic Adoration could be carried out by taking turns, with a thematic variation every hour.

Durante the celebration of the vigil, moments of silent prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament should not be lacking.

OUTLINE FOR A TURN

After Exposure of the Most Blessed Sacrament and a moment of silence, the musical group sings a selection. The reading of a biblical passage follows.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah (1:10-19)

Hear the word of the Lord, princes of Sodom!
Listen to the instruction of our God, people of Gomorrah!
What do I care about the number of your sacrifices? says the Lord.
I have had enough of whole-burnt rams and fat of fatlings.
In the blood of calves, lambs, and goats I find no pleasure.
When you come in to visit me, who asks these things of you?
Trample my courts no more! Bring no more worthless offerings.
Your incense is loathsome to me.
New moon and sabbath, calling of assemblies, octaves of wickedness: these I cannot bear.
I detest your new moons and festivals; they weigh me down. I tire of the load.
When you spread out your hands, I close my eyes to you.
Though you pray even more, I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood.
Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds 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 crimson red, they may become white as wool.
If you are willing, and obey, you shall eat the good things of the land.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Everyone remains in silence.

TESTIMONY/MEDITATION

Testimony of conversion is then presented. This testimony could be provided by a person desiring to share how the Lord has touched his or her heart with the grace of forgiveness, or it could be read (e.g., this pastoral aid contains the testimony of Olivia Hurst on the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*). In the event that it is not possible to present a testimony, a written meditation may be used, 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.

After the testimony/meditation a selection is sung, and everyone remains in silent prayer, which is followed by intercessory prayer in which the whole assembly takes part.

PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

We turn to her, a woman of profound peace who is the Queen of Peace:

*Pray with us, faithful Woman and Sacred Vessel of the Word.
Teach us to listen to the cry of the poor and of mother earth;
to be attentive to the promptings of the Spirit in the secret of our hearts,
in the lives of our brothers and sisters and in the events of history,
in the groaning and rejoicing of creation.
Holy Mary, Mother of all the Living,
strong, sorrowful, faithful Woman,
Virgin Bride at the foot of the Cross,
where love is consummated and life flows forth,
be the guide of our commitment to service.*

*Teach us to stand with you at the countless crosses
where your Son is still crucified,
where life is most threatened.
Teach us to live and bear witness to Christian love,
by welcoming everyone as brothers and sisters;
to renounce the darkness of selfishness
in order to follow Christ, the true light of humanity.*

*Virgin of peace, Gate of Sure Hope,
accept the prayers of your children!
Amen.*

(Meditation Of The Holy Father Leo XIX, Prayer Vigil And Rosary for Peace. St Peter's Square Saturday, 11 October 2025)

There follows singing and a time of silent prayer until the end of this “turn” in the successive periods of prayer.

In keeping with the duration of the whole vigil, this outline may be repeated while varying the biblical passages and songs and alternating testimonies, meditations, and prayers.

In view of the liturgical time of Lent, it would be desirable to include the *Via Crucis* as well. The Holy Rosary and/or the Rosary of Divine Mercy.

Other biblical passages to accompany additional turns in the vigil:

Psalm 51 (a psalm of repentance); Mt 6:1-21 (almsgiving – prayer - fasting); Lk 6:27-38 (love for one’s enemies – do not judge); Lk 24:13-34 (two disciples on the road to Emmaus).

As an alternative for both individual orientation and community celebration, a *Message of Pope Leo XIV for Lent 2026*.

MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIV FOR LENT 2026

Listening and Fasting: Lent as a Time of Conversion

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.

Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through *listening*. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry” (*Ex 3:7*). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen *as he does*. We must recognize that “the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church.”

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, *fasting* is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we “hunger” for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our “appetites,” keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfilment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: “In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands

the soul and increases its capacity.” Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because “those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly.” As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since “austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic.”

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one’s conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity’s thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.