

POPE JOHN PAUL II ASKS FOR FORGIVENESS (MARCH 12, 2000)
CONFESSION OF SINS AND ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

March 12, 2000

Introduction

The Holy Father: Brothers and Sisters, let us turn with trust to God our Father, who is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, great in love and fidelity, and ask him to accept the repentance of his people who humbly confess their sins, and to grant them mercy.

[All pray for a moment in silence.]

I. Confession of Sins in General

Cardinal Bernardin Gantin: Let us pray that our confession and repentance will be inspired by the Holy Spirit, that our sorrow will be conscious and deep, and that, humbly viewing the sins of the past in an authentic "purification of memory", we will be committed to the path of true conversion. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: Lord God, your pilgrim Church, which you ever sanctify in the blood of your Son, counts among her children in every age members whose holiness shines brightly forth and members whose disobedience to you contradicts the faith we profess and the Holy Gospel. You, who remain ever faithful, even when we are unfaithful, forgive our sins and grant that we may bear true witness to you before all men and women. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Cantor: Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

The assembly repeats: Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

II. Confession of Sins Committed in the Service of Truth

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger: Let us pray that each one of us, looking to the Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart, will recognize that even men of the Church, in the name of faith and morals, have sometimes used methods not in keeping with the Gospel in the solemn duty of defending the truth. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: Lord, God of all men and women, in certain periods of history Christians have at times given in to intolerance and have not been faithful to the great commandment of love, sullyng in this way the face of the Church, your Spouse. Have mercy on your sinful children and accept our resolve to seek and promote truth in the gentleness of charity, in the firm knowledge that truth can prevail only in virtue of truth itself. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

III. Confession of Sins which have Harmed the unity of the body of Christ

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray: Let us pray that our recognition of the sins which have rent the unity of the Body of Christ and wounded fraternal charity will facilitate the way to reconciliation and communion among all Christians. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: Merciful Father, on the night before his Passion your Son prayed for the unity of those who believe in him: in disobedience to his will, however, believers have opposed one another, becoming divided, and have mutually condemned one another and fought against one another. We urgently implore your forgiveness and we beseech the gift of a repentant heart, so that all Christians, reconciled with you and with one another will be able, in one body and in one spirit, to experience anew the joy of full communion. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

IV. Confession of the Sins Against the People of Israel

Cardinal Edward Cassidy: Let us pray that, in recalling the sufferings endured by the people of Israel throughout history, Christians will acknowledge the sins committed by not a few of their number against the people of the Covenant and the blessings, and in this way will purify their hearts. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit

ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

V. Confession of Sins Committed in Action Against Love, Peace, the Rights of Peoples, and Respect for Cultures and Religions

Archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao: Let us pray that contemplating Jesus, our Lord and our Peace, Christians will be able to repent of the words and attitudes caused by pride, by hatred, by the desire to dominate others, by enmity towards members of other religions and towards the weakest groups in society, such as immigrants and itinerants. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: Lord of the world, Father of all, through your Son you asked us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us and to pray for those who persecute us. Yet Christians have often denied the Gospel; yielding to a mentality of power, they have violated the rights of ethnic groups and peoples, and shown contempt for their cultures and religious traditions: be patient and merciful towards us, and grant us your forgiveness! We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

VI. Confession of Sins Against the Dignity of Women and the Unity of The Human Race

Cardinal Francis Arinze: Let us pray for all those who have suffered offences against their human dignity and whose rights have been trampled; let us pray for women, who are all too often humiliated and emarginated, and let us acknowledge the forms of acquiescence in these sins of which Christians too have been guilty. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: Lord God, our Father, you created the human being, man and woman, in your image and likeness and you willed the diversity of peoples within the unity of the human family. At times, however, the equality of your sons and daughters has not been acknowledged, and Christians have been guilty of attitudes of rejection and exclusion, consenting to acts of discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic differences. Forgive us and grant us the grace to heal the wounds still present in your community on account of sin, so that we will all feel ourselves to be your sons and

daughters. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

VII. Confession of SUnS in Relation to the Fundamental Rights of the Person

Archbishop François Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân: Let us pray for all the men and women of the world, especially for minors who are victims of abuse, for the poor, the alienated, the disadvantaged; let us pray for those who are most defenceless, the unborn killed in their mother's womb or even exploited for experimental purposes by those who abuse the promise of biotechnology and distort the aims of science. [Silent prayer.]

The Holy Father: God, our Father, you always hear the cry of the poor. How many times have Christians themselves not recognized you in the hungry, the thirsty and the naked, in the persecuted, the imprisoned, and in those incapable of defending themselves, especially in the first stages of life. For all those who have committed acts of injustice by trusting in wealth and power and showing contempt for the "little ones" who are so dear to you, we ask your forgiveness: have mercy on us and accept our repentance. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

[A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.]

Concluding Prayer

The Holy Father: Most merciful Father, your Son, Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead, in the humility of his first coming redeemed humanity from sin and in his glorious return he will demand an account of every sin. Grant that our forebears, our brothers and sisters, and we, your servants, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit turn back to you in whole-hearted repentance, may experience your mercy and receive the forgiveness of our sins. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

[As a sign of penance and veneration the Holy Father embraces and kisses the Crucifix.]