

## **Some advice in view of our inability to gain access to the sacrament of Confession at this time.**

The inability to respond to a person's request to access the Sacrament of Reconciliation goes very much against all our instincts as priests and our desire to bring the Lord's mercy to those who seek it. We cannot though, in this period of quarantine as well as the restrictions on travel and gathering together, provide a responsible and safe access to this Sacrament. For the safety of the penitent and priests at this time, the normal circumstances under which we can offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to the faithful are almost entirely absent.

Recently, the Holy Father Pope Francis said something in a homily which may help someone who is unable to go to confession at this time: *"I know that many of you go to confession before Easter... Many will say to me: 'But Father...I can't leave the house and I want to make my peace with the Lord...How can I do that unless I find a priest'? ...Do what the catechism says. It's very clear. If you don't find a priest to go to confession, speak to God. He's your Father. Tell Him the truth: 'Lord. I did this and this and this. Pardon me.' Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an act of contrition, and promise Him, 'afterward I will go to confession.' You will return to God's grace immediately."*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (§1452) also says: *"When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect' - contrition of charity. Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible."*

Requests for individual confession are almost impossible to meet within the restrictions we are obliged to follow for the safety of penitents and priests at this time. For this reason, it is deemed both reasonable and pastorally responsible for a priest to refuse a request for individual confession in these exceptional times. This will not be an easy thing for us to do.

In these circumstances, the Bishops of England and Wales have asked that all who desire to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be encouraged and helped to make a Perfect Act of Contrition at this time as indicated by the Holy Father. A prayer that might help you to do so is as follows:

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; 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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life.  
Amen.**

Despite the foregoing, in the event of an emergency, I will make every effort to give the Sacraments of the Church to the person in need. The only thing that could prevent me from doing so is the internal regulations of the Hospital or Care Home, so please ensure that you tell the doctors/nurses that your loved one would like to see a Catholic Priest in the event of an emergency.

God bless,

Fr Mark

