

## The Forgiveness of Sins in Emergencies

The Church clearly tells us that “Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful who is conscious of grave sin can be reconciled with God and the Church”.

However, the Church recognises that we can find ourselves in situations where “physical or moral impossibility excuses from confession” and that “in such a case reconciliation can be obtained by other means”<sup>1</sup>.

In other words, if we can go to Confession then we must go to Confession, but if we cannot go to Confession because a priest cannot come to us or because we are in hospital or self-isolation, then God, in his love for us offers us other means of forgiveness. God does not want “that any should perish”<sup>2</sup> but rather “desires all men to be saved”<sup>3</sup>.

If we cannot get to Confession but truly wish our sins forgiven then we must make an act of perfect contrition. Perfect contrition means that we hate the sins we have committed, are truly sorry for them and are resolved not to sin again, as we say in the Act of Contrition. Such an act of perfect contrition obtains forgiveness of mortal sin as long as we have a firm intention to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

In making an act of perfect contrition, we could use the words that are familiar to us from the “I Confess” at Mass or from the prayer often used at Stations of the Cross, “I love thee, Jesus, my love above all things”, or we could use whichever act of contrition we normally use in Confession. **What matters is not the words so much as the intention behind the words, the intention to love God, to be truly sorry for our sins, and to intend to confess in the normal manner as soon as possible.**

Added to this, Pope Francis has offered the possibility of gaining a Plenary Indulgence. A Plenary Indulgence is the Church’s way of applying the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints, taking away all punishments due for the sins that we have committed and which have been forgiven by the perfect act of contrition.

Those who are suffering from the coronavirus can obtain this Indulgence by joining in the Mass or Rosary via TV or internet, or at least by saying the Creed, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary.

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<sup>1</sup> C.960 *Code of Canon Law*

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 3:9

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4

<sup>4</sup> §1452 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The indulgence is also granted to every Catholic who, at the point of death, cannot receive the Last Rites (as may well be the case due to current health restrictions), and who, in their life, has tried to pray and to love God.