



MEMO 79

Sacrament of Penance and Lent

To: Priests
Subject: The Sacrament of Penance and Lent
Date: March 29, 2022

Dear Brother Priest,

I do not need to remind you that the Sacrament of Penance is not very popular these days: the faithful rarely resort to it, even though evil continues its destructive ravages.

In Lent 2015, I wrote a Pastoral Letter on the subject of *conversion and the Sacrament of Penance*, inviting priests and faithful to rediscover its place in our Christian life. On several occasions, our Holy Father Pope Francis has emphasized the importance of this sacrament; see Communiqué n. 69 (December 29, 2015) and n. 74 (February 3, 2016), with the institution of the "24 hours for the Lord", as priests make themselves more available to welcome the faithful. I returned to this theme with Communiqués n. 81 (June 22, 2016) and 88 (November 22, 2016), and then n. 97 (March 20, 2017) evoking the ministry of the confessional.

Last week, Pope Francis addressed a group of priests and deacons who were participating in a session on the internal forum; in his address (attached) he emphasized three aspects: *welcome, listening and accompaniment*: he also recalled the absolute respect of the secret of confession, alluding to the Note of the Apostolic Penitentiary in this regard:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_pro_20190629_forointerno_en.html

On the same day, the Pope presided at the penitential celebration in St. Peter's Basilica; it is always impressive to see the Pope himself confessing before going to hear the confession of the other faithful. I am sending you the translation (attached) that I made of the examination of conscience used on that occasion; it can be made available to the faithful to help them prepare for their encounter with the Lord in the sacrament of his mercy.

It would be good to indicate the times when you will be more available to celebrate the Lord's mercy, especially in these last days of preparation for the Easter celebrations.

+ Serge Poitras

✘ Serge Poitras
Bishop of Timmins