

“RECONCILIATION IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST

A number of people have asked me in recent days about Reconciliation when they are (reasonably) unable to confess to a priest.

This is not a new issue in the Catholic Tradition. The Church’s teaching is simple and very practical. Here is a paragraph from a recent statement from the Holy See’s Press Office – “Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the current pandemic, 20.03.2020”:
“Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

There are three steps indicated by the Roman document and they might be expressed something like this:

- 1. Say in your heart: “God matters to me. I’m sorry. I want to get back together with God again. That’s where I’ll find peace again.”**
- 2. Gently face and name those matters for which you seek God’s healing mercy. Give them over to God.**
- 3. Intend to seek out the Sacrament of Reconciliation when a priest is available.**

The Church thus offers a way to receive forgiveness of sins – yes, even mortal sins – in the absence of a priest. We should avail ourselves of this opportunity.

You could also make a little ritual of the process by meditating briefly on a passage from the Gospel and even getting on your knees to express in your own way what is on your heart. “