

A humbling return to Mass and the sacraments



I went [back to Mass for the first time](#) after a two-month-or-so fast because of the coronavirus. And I cried – sobbed, wept, was a mess. My gratitude overflowed. If there is one thing that I have become acutely aware of during these times without Mass, it is how utterly unworthy I am of God's greatest gift of himself to my life, one he himself willed into being.

It's that unworthiness and my complete weakness without him that has been unmistakable during this time of the pandemic. I can't help but think that's why he allowed it. Don't we know just how much we long to be in the presence of the Real Presence? Life isn't the same with locked churches. Everything is so much harder when you have the time to be in front of the Eucharistic Lord. The power in his humility, in the reality of the divine gift of the sacraments, is overwhelming, healing and strengthening.

I cried, too, when I returned to confession. Reconciliation is always humbling, but it takes on a new quality when you used to regularly go and you haven't been able to during the lockdown. You have to face the ugly things that linger a little too long, infecting your choices and how you treated others. But that blessed, merciful encounter! I used to say that I would die without confession! And so, of course, that was tested. I survived, but I'm not quite proud of the way I did. At times, It felt like I was barely surviving. And isn't there liberation in that? Everything we say that we believe about God being our strength is true! So how do we stay close to him?

Another thing I've been thinking a lot about is our priests.

We need them. And so we need to be more devoted to them. That doesn't mean giving them an exalted status in worldly ways. That doesn't mean foregoing any oversight or ignoring the abuse scandal. It means loving them into holiness. The holiest priests that I know would love prayers offered and sacrifices made for them.

What about [reparation for the sins of the Church](#) – not just priests behaving badly, but all of us? Yes, there is a particular evil associated with priests who prey on others, as we know has happened, including precious, innocent, helpless children. We all need to strive to live lives that are blameless, and our priests and consecrated in a particular way.

And that takes a whole lot of grace. Is there any reason why every Catholic wouldn't [adopt and pray](#) for a priest and not say an Our Father once a day or even every now and again? Could you give up something you really like for him? Something that would hurt a little to sacrifice for him? Could you serve someone whom it might be hard for you to serve? As members of the Body of Christ, these things have meaning. God works with these things for healing and strengthening. If you have a church near you that is open for Eucharistic adoration, now or soon, could you do a weekly Holy Hour for him? Could you adopt a bishop? Maybe yours, maybe another?

Do we pray for sisters? I think of my friends at the Little Sisters of the Poor. Because they have a [Supreme Court case](#) pending, I think people are praying for them more than usual, but these have been some of the hardest days of their lives, certainly in recent history. I should pray more for my friend, Sister Constance. I pray for her, but I should love until it hurts a bit, as God does for us.

For the longest time, I wanted to write a book about Pope Francis with the title, "Why Is This Man Weeping?" Especially early on in his pontificate, he always seemed to be talking

about weeping in prayer. This is something we're called to, and not only because we were in some kind of agony being physically absent from Mass.

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