

Angelus: Rediscover The Sacrament Of Penance

At midday today, Benedict XVI appeared at the window of his study overlooking St. Peter's Square to pray the Angelus with faithful gathered below.

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Commenting upon the Gospel reading from today's Mass, in which St. Mark recounts Jesus' miraculous healing of a leper, the Pope explained how "according to ancient Jewish Law leprosy was considered not just as an illness but as the most serious form of 'impurity'. It was the priest's task to diagnose it and declare as unclean the sick person, who then had to leave the community ... until his recovery, if any, a recovery that had to be properly certified. Leprosy, then, constituted a kind of religious and civil death, and its cure a sort of resurrection.

"In leprosy", he added, "we may see a symbol of sin, which is the true impurity of the heart and has the power to distance us from God. It is not in fact the physical sickness of leprosy, as established by the ancient laws, that separates us from Him, but guilt, spiritual and moral evil. ... The sins we commit distance us from God and, if not humbly confessed with trust in divine mercy, they go so far as to produce the death of the soul".

The Holy Father then observed how Christ during His Passion "would become as a leper, made unclean by our sins, separated from God: and He would do this for love, in order to obtain reconciliation, forgiveness and salvation for us".

"In the Sacrament of Penance the crucified and risen Christ, through His ministers, purifies us with His infinite mercy, He restores us to communion with the heavenly Father and with our brothers and sisters, He makes us the gift of His love, His joy and His peace".

Benedict XVI concluded by inviting the faithful "to make frequent use of the Sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of Forgiveness, which we must increasingly rediscover today in the value and importance it has for our lives as Christians".

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