



24 HOURS FOR THE LORD

The “24 Hours for the Lord” was introduced by Pope Francis in 2014 and has been held every year since. It is a Lenten initiative of prayer and reconciliation. It is celebrated on the eve of the Fourth Sunday of Lent each year. Its intention is to put the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre of the pastoral life of the Church. Parishes and communities can implement this initiative taking care to adapt it according to local needs and customs.

PRAYER

Gracious God,
we come before you with open hearts
to be healed by your love and mercy.
Look with compassion on us as we acknowledge our failures;
heal our wounds and stretch out your hand of love
to save us and raise us up.
Keep us free from harm as members of Christ’s body,
as sheep of your flock, as children of your family.
Hear the prayer we offer you O God.
Lead us back to the way of holiness,
and protect us now and always.
May we ever keep safe in all its fullness
the gift your love once gave us and your mercy now restores.
We pray in Jesus’ name,
he who lives with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.

TEACHING

“Lent is the season most appropriate for celebrating the sacrament of penance. Already on Ash Wednesday the people of God hear the solemn invitation, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to



the Gospel.' It is therefore fitting to have several penitential services during Lent, so that all the faithful may have an opportunity to be reconciled with God and their neighbour and so be able to celebrate the paschal mystery in the Easter triduum with renewed hearts” (Rite of Penance 13).

The focus of “24 Hours for the Lord” is on the Sacrament of Penance. A program for the day will be flexible but could look something like this:

- Friday Evening: Communal parish celebration of Penance.
See *Rite of Penance*, Chapter II: Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (Options for different celebrations are given in nos 48-59).
- Saturday morning: 10am to 12 noon, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This should always be arranged with time for silent prayer, reading from the Word of God, homily, songs, and prayers; it concludes with a blessing with the monstrance (*Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, no. 89, 93-100).

In the context of the Lenten Jubilee of 24 Hours, it is recommended that the prayers should take the form of one of the two sample Penitential Services given for Lent: See *Rite of Penance*, Appendix II (nos. 5-19).

- Saturday afternoon: Many parishes schedule individual celebrations of the Sacrament of Penance. Special invitations could be extended to parishioners for this time.

The “24 Hours for the Lord” concludes with the first Sunday Mass on Saturday evening. The Year A readings for the Fourth Sunday of Lent should be used: The Gospel is the story of the man born blind. The penitential elements of the Mass can be emphasised: The Penitential Act, The Lord’s Prayer, The Lamb of God.



Christ Healing the Blind Man: Mid-12th-century mural from the Hermitage of San Baudelio de Berlanga (Soria), and now housed in the Cloisters Museum in New York (Photo: Lawrence Lew OP, [Flickr](#)).



TESTIMONY

Kevin Matthews was a well-known radio personality in Chicago. In 2008 he was diagnosed with a rare form of multiple sclerosis. At the same time his fame was fading (just as radio was fading as a widespread medium) and he soon found himself out of work. A triple blow: the loss of his job, an incurable disease, and the loss of celebrity status. He was carrying all this on his shoulders when he had a life-changing moment. One day, as he was getting out of his car to buy flowers at a store outside a cemetery near Chicago, he saw a large statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus, lying next to a dumpster.



The statue was broken, fractured in half just below the waist, and Mary's hands were also broken. That abandoned statue was also full of dirt and dust from being exposed to the dumpster. At that point, Kevin thought, "Mary is broken. I am also broken." Kevin picked up the statue and brought it home. Thus the story of the "Broken Mary" was born. He had the statue repaired, but he kept her broken hands and other "scars" as a reminder of his own fragility and the fragility within all of us. Kevin credits Mary with bringing him back to the Catholic faith and changing his life. God's grace and Mary's blessing saved him from the despair he was experiencing. He now tells his story to packed churches and takes the statue to churches, prisons, hospitals and other places, talking about Mary's love for God's children and encouraging people to pray the rosary. His message is simple: there is hope for the broken. Kevin's testimony is an account of his own conversion story: a conversion from being Catholic by name to being an enthusiastic promoter of devotion to Mary and, through her, of consecration to her Son.

- From '[Eleventh 24 Hours for the Lord](#)' (2024), Dicastery of Evangelisation. Image: Broken Mary (Facebook).

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

For peace and reconciliation in those communities suffering because of division and disharmony.

We pray to the Lord.

For each of us gathered here that God's healing presence will continue to enrich our lives as we serve one another.

We pray to the Lord.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Rite of Penance (Sydney, EJ Dwyer, 1975).

Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (Sydney, EJ Dwyer, 1975).

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