



Confessionals are generally quiet, darkened places. But what does heaven look and sound like when a soul enters a confessional?

Pope Francis today invited the faithful to think about the rejoicing and celebrating in heaven when a sinner repents.

He made this invitation before praying the midday Angelus with those in St. Peter's Square today, as he reflected on the heart of God as revealed in the three parables from Luke 18 recounted in today's liturgy.

"A common element in these parables is expressed in the verbs that mean rejoice together, make a celebration," the Pope noted. "Mourning is not spoken of; there is rejoicing, there is celebrating. The shepherd calls his friends and neighbors and says, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep' (v 6). The woman calls her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost' (v. 9). And the father says to his other son: 'now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found' (v. 32).

"In the first two parables, the focus is on the joy that is so uncontainable that it must be shared with 'friends and neighbors.' In the third parable, the focus is on the celebration that springs from the heart of the merciful father and expands to the whole household."

The Pope said that with these parables Jesus is presenting us with "the true face of God, a God with his arms always open, a God who deals with sinners with tenderness and compassion."

God is waiting for us to get back up again, to rise up out of sin, the Pope explained. And "he awaits us with patience, he sees us when we are still a long way off, he runs to meet us, he embraces us, he kisses us, he forgives us. That is how God is. That is how our Father is."

"And," the Pope continued, "his forgiveness cancels the past and regenerates us in

love. To forget the past — this is the weakness of God. When he embraces us, he forgives us, and he loses his memory. He doesn't have memory. He forgets the past. When we sinners convert and bring ourselves to be re-encountered by God, reproaches and sternness do not await us, because God saves, he welcomes us home again with joy and makes a celebration."

Beautiful

(ZENIT, Vatican City, September 11, 2016) Jesus himself speaks of the rejoicing in Heaven, the Pontiff noted. It is Jesus who says, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

In this light, the Pope proposed a question: "Have you ever thought about how each time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven?" he asked. "Have you ever thought of this? It's beautiful."

Francis said that we can be filled with great hope, since "there is no sin in which we may have fallen, from which, with the grace of God, we cannot rise up again."

No one is so far gone they can't be recovered, he assured, "because God never stops wanting our good — even when we sin!"

The Pope concluded with a prayer to Our Lady, under the title of Refuge of Sinners, asking that through her intercession, the confidence of the prodigal son might well up in our hearts: "I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you,'" the prodigal son said.

"On this path," the Pope affirmed, "we can give glory to God, and his glory can become his celebration, and ours."

Full text:

<https://zenit.org/articles/angelus-address-on-gods-celebrations-over-repentant-sinners/>