



God will forgive us only if we forgive others without any rancor. Delivering a homily during Mass Tuesday morning at the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta chapel, Pope Francis once more returned to one of his favourite themes - forgiveness. He warned about the danger of allowing ourselves to be enslaved by hatred. He reminded Christians that the first requisite for being pardoned by God is to recognize ourselves as sinners.

I have sinned

Reflecting on the First Reading from the **Book of Daniel**, the Pope drew attention to **Azariah** who after being thrown into the burning furnace for refusing to deny the Lord, does not complain to God for the treatment suffered, nor does he blame Him claiming his loyalty. Instead, he continues to profess the greatness of God and points out the root cause of evil acknowledging that God has always saved them but unfortunately they have sinned.

The accusation of ourselves, the Pope pointed out, is the first step towards forgiveness.

The Pope said that **accusing oneself** and not others is part of **Christian wisdom**. This is the attitude the Pope recommended when approaching the sacrament of penance- The great God has given me so much and unfortunately I have sinned. I have offended the Lord and I ask for salvation.

God justifies us

Pope Francis recalled an episode of a woman who at confession while trying to justify herself was recounting a long list of the sins of her mother-in-law. The confessor cut her short asking her to start confessing her own sins.

Pointing to Azariah, the Holy Father said the Lord loves a **contrite heart**, saying those who trust in God are never disappointed. A contrite heart tells the truth to the Lord. And what the Lord does, the Pope said, is shut our mouth, like the father does to the **Prodigal Son**. He does not allow him to speak, but covers him with love, forgiving everything.

God forgives provided we forgive

Pope Francis invited Christians not to be ashamed of admitting their sins, assuring them that the Lord justifies us by forgiving us, not just once but always, but on condition that we forgive others. The Pope acknowledged it is not easy to forgive because **rancor**, he said, makes a nest in our hearts, always leaving behind a bitter taste. We often narrate a lot of things others have done to us.

Watch out against hatred

Pope Francis warned Christians against being enslaved to hatred. He urged them to keep two things in mind. We need to praise the Lord and acknowledge our sins, and the second - **God pardons us seventy times seven**, provided we forgive others.