

Pope: Priests lacking mercy shouldn't hear confession; get desk job

By Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY - To be a true Christian means being forgiving, kind, humble, gentle, generous, merciful and very patient with one another, Pope Francis said in a morning homily.

Priests must be especially merciful, he added, saying if that they weren't, then they should ask their bishop for a desk job and "never walk into a confessional, I beg you."

"A priest who isn't merciful does much damage in the confessional. He berates people," the pope said Sept. 10 during the Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

However, if snapping at people is caused not by a lack of compassion, but by being high-strung, then "go to a doctor who will give you a pill for your nerves. Just be merciful," he said.

The pope focused his homily on the day's reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians (3:12-17), which says God's chosen ones must be holy, compassionate, kind, gentle and very forgiving because "as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do."

The pope said, "If you do not know how to forgive, you are not a Christian. You may be a good man, a good woman," but a Christian has to go further than that and do what Christ did, which included forgiving those who wronged him.

When people pray the Our Father and ask the Lord to “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” it should not be a string of empty words trying to convince God how good we are to gain his favor. Rather, it goes the other way around, the pope said: “The Lord has forgiven you, so you must also do.”

God is always merciful, he said, “he always forgives us, he always wants peace with us.” If people are not merciful, too, “you run the risk that the Lord will not be merciful with you because we will be judged with the same measure with which we judge others.”

It is important to “understand others, not condemn them,” he said.

The pope praised those “heroic” men and women who display such needed “Christian patience” and courage: women who endure “so much brutality, so many injustices” in order to help their children and family, and men who endure difficult, even unjust, working conditions in order to support their family. “These are the just,” the pope said.

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