



[Jesus said,]
“For where
two or three
are gathered
together in my
name, there
am I in the
midst of them.”

MATTHEW 18:20

Like a Gentile or a Tax Collector

ANN M. GARRIDO

As someone who works in the field of conflict management, I like to think that all situations can be worked out if we go about it in a skilled manner. If we use the right words. Ask the right kinds of questions. It's embarrassing to admit that even the best “tools” in my “conflict belt” sometimes still effect little change. Today's gospel can be consoling in a strange way. It acknowledges that even when we use all the tools we have on hand to heal a relationship, it doesn't always work out. Sometimes, we may need to become strangers to one another, at least for a while—like a Jew to a Gentile or a tax collector.

Of course, when Jesus says “treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector,” it is important to consider how Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors. He healed the centurion's servant. He ate in Zacchaeus' house. Jesus did not see Gentiles and tax collectors as enemies and did not treat them as such. Rather, Jesus understood Gentiles and tax collectors as those with whom he might start a relationship should the opportunity present itself. The past cannot be rewritten, but perhaps a different kind of future is still possible.

Is there a relationship in your life that feels beyond healing at this point and from which perhaps you need some distance? Is it still possible to treat the other person with the kindness Jesus showed toward Gentiles and tax collectors? ●



LEARN ABOUT
THE AUTHORS
OF OUR PARISH
COMMUNITY

Reflect

Could I improve how I handle conflict with others?

Dear Padre,

I had not been to confession for decades until recently, and I've probably committed mortal sins I can't remember. I want God's forgiveness, but I'm unsure how to get it at this time.

You ask if God has forgiven you for sins that you may have committed in the past but that you don't remember now. You say you have been to confession recently.

A mortal sin has three criteria: it is seriously wrong; the person knows it is seriously wrong; and the person is free to commit the sin or not. In the case you are describing, you don't even remember what the mortal sin might have been, or even if there was one. So, no, you don't have to confess something you don't remember. Also, you have already gone to confession recently, and you sound truly repentant for your past sins. You do not indicate that you were deliberately trying to hide any sins from the priest. So, you have already been forgiven, not only for the sins you remembered but also for those you don't remember. That is why usually we will say something like "for these sins and for those I may have forgotten" when we go to confession.

The bottom line is that confession is for you to experience God's mercy. It is not to test how good your memory is. Be at peace. God loves you and particularly wants you to experience the peace that comes from his forgiveness. ●



JON TYSON / UNSPLASH

Fr. Gary Lauenstein, CSsR / DearPadre.org

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

The Church is at the same time an earthly community and the mystical body of Christ, a visible assembly and a spiritual mystery, a reality present in history and a people journeying toward heaven (Lumen Gentium, 8; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 771). The human and divine

dimensions integrate harmoniously, without one overshadowing the other.... [The Church] is a reality that is both human and divine.

**GENERAL AUDIENCE,
ROME, MARCH 4, 2026**

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Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to **DearPadre.org** to send your question and to learn more about **Dear Padre**.

Monday

September 7

Weekday

1 Cor 5:1-8

Lk 6:6-11

Tuesday

September 8

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mi 5:1-4a or
Rom 8:28-30

Mt 1:1-16, 18-23
or 1:18-23

Wednesday

September 9

St. Peter Claver, Priest

1 Cor 7:25-31

Lk 6:20-26

Thursday

September 10

Weekday

1 Cor 8:1b-7, 11-13

Lk 6:27-38

Friday

September 11

Weekday

1 Cor 9:16-19,
22b-27

Lk 6:39-42

Saturday

September 12

Weekday

1 Cor 10:14-22

Lk 6:43-49

Sunday

September 13

*Twenty-fourth Sunday
in Ordinary Time*

Sir 27:30-28:7

Rom 14:7-9

Mt 18:21-35