

FORGIVE ME FATHER

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FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH NAVE

The Church is basically empty, aside from some hushed whispers and a sweeping broom. The image of the "Saint Sebastian" on stained glass stares out into the church. It is adorned with candles.

DEACON SEBASTIAN (23) opens the back church door and walks inside, as light floods in behind him. He is wearing a classic vestment and his hair is to the side.

The Deacon does not lift his head, staring straight down at the floor, as he approaches the confessional. He hesitates before entering.

INT. CONFESSIONAL

The Deacon enters the confessional, and he tidies himself up. Slithers of light enters the confessional from the outside. The Deacon sits in silence until-

BISHOP FRANCIS (60) enters the other end of the confessional. Bishop Francis wears white episcopal vestments. Both sit in silence on either side.

Suddenly, the Bishop slides the grille, revealing himself through the grated window.

The Bishop takes out a match and lights the candle to his left and does the sign of the cross.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
Forgive me Father, for I have
sinned.

The Bishop faces forwards.

BISHOP FRANCIS
How long since your last
confession?

DEACON SEBASTIAN
I think it's been about a month
Father...

BISHOP FRANCIS
Feels like it's been longer than
that Sebastian. You are about to be
ordained as a Priest of the church.
So, what has kept you?

DEACON SEBASTIAN
I am thinking about leaving the
church.

The Deacon looks down.

BISHOP FRANCIS
I'm listening, son.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
Father, I am in pain. Saint
Augustine says "There's no Saint
without a past and no sinner
without a future." I have felt the
urge to sin and I fear will break
my vows...

The Deacon does not look up.

DEACON SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
I kind of wonder what my life would
have been like if I- I just feel
like someone else chose my life for
me.

Both take a moment before the Bishop steps in. A Rosary Beads
is wrapped around the Bishop's hand, with the cross hanging.

BISHOP FRANCIS
Corinthians, 10:13 - "No temptation
has overtaken you except what is
common to mankind."
(beat)
This is the path you chose,
Sebastian. You walk where you will,
but do not let what is common
derive you from your path my son.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
I know Bishop Francis, but I don't
question God's love, and that's
just it.
(beat)
I have urges, but I don't see them
as a will of the flesh. I was
raised in the church but I have
seen, in others, the joy of being
part of a family... and I envy it.

The Deacon rubs his face.

BISHOP FRANCIS
Go on.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
 I fear God's love isn't enough for
 me, father. How's that for a sin?

Silence as the pair take this in.

DEACON SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
 (Hesitantly, fidgeting
 with his hands)
 I... I don't know what I'm saying,
 I'm sorry. Can you please just
 forgive me so I may leave?

A longer silence breaks through. The Deacon begins to fix himself up and begins to leave the confessional.

BISHOP FRANCIS
 Sebastian, I cannot grant you
 absolution for what you have
 confessed to me today.

Sebastian freezes. He tilts his head up immediately, then looks at the Bishop through the grille. The Bishop does not flinch as he continues to stare forwards.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
 What?

BISHOP FRANCIS
 I can't forgive you.

The bishop starts looking at the Deacon. The Deacon stares puzzled, locking his eyes on the Bishop. He sits back down.

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)
 Sebastian, if you are going to
 leave the church for good, I too
 have a confession to make.

Deacon slowly resumes to his position staring at the Bishop now curious and humbled.

DEACON SEBASTIAN
 I don't understand Father Francis.

The Bishop puts the Rosary Beads away.

BISHOP FRANCIS
 When I was still a Priest, right
 around when I first moved here, I
 would sweep the church from corner
 to corner.

FLASHBACK: MIA (20) walks in and sits in the right side of the pew. Mia is sitting calmly and she smiles as Priest Francis walks towards her and places his hand on her left shoulder.

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)

But every day I would always notice this young woman who would come to visit the church. She never came to mass... never heard the sermons... and she never confessed. I just remember her coming in and sitting at that same pew... She would gaze calmly at the stained glass, and that's it. She made time for it, sometimes for five minutes other times for hours. I think she found God in those colors...

DEACON SEBASTIAN

Why you are telling me this, father?

The Bishop stares at the Deacon.

BISHOP FRANCIS

Just listen Sebastian, one day I see her crying incessantly. You see, I felt it was my duty to help her. So, I approached her.

(beat)

Anyways, a friendship was born. We understood each other.

The Bishop smiles and bows his head down absorbed in those memories.

FLASHBACK: Mia is pregnant walking in the outside of the church trying to find Priest Francis. She spots him, she walks towards him trying to talk to him. He looks at her, turns away and enters the church. She is left there shocked and broken as she holds her belly.

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)

But, one day, she came in with the news that she was pregnant, but the man in question could not give her the support she needed. Her friends and family shunned her; judged her because she never revealed who the man was. But she kept her head high. She was going to start her OWN family.

The bishop lowers his head slowly. Sighs deeply.

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)

But on the day of the birth there
were complications...

FLASHBACK: Mia is sitting and writing on a paper note. In the background is a cradle with a faint baby crying noise. Mia gets up and leaves the frame, we see the note, it is signed "to Francis". Mia hangs herself as her legs swings into the frame.

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)

The child was fine, but Mia... she
passed. Right in front of me, she
left us before she could ever start
her family...

The Bishop looks straight at the Deacon.

DEACON SEBASTIAN

(almost a murmur)

I'm sorry to hear about that
father, but... where is the sin in
all this?

The Bishop clears his throat.

BISHOP FRANCIS

Well, you see Sebastian, the, the
child was mine... a miracle that
was born out of sin, but either
way, I couldn't keep him,
especially with her gone. No one
knew it was my child.

Silence between them covers the confessionals. The Bishop begins to close the grille but the Deacon stops him by holding the grille.

DEACON SEBASTIAN

But father, what happen to him?

The Bishop looks compassionately at Sebastian.

BISHOP FRANCIS

The boy... I tried my best to stay
close to him. I owed her that. So,
I had him put into a church-run
orphanage, where he was accepted. I
kept my distance but only at an
arm's reach.

The Bishop pauses and looks intently at Deacon Sebastian who is looking down puzzled and intrigued. He then clears his throat gently and continues...

BISHOP FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I just hope... he will absolve me
of this confession today...

Silence covers the confessional. The Bishop waits for a response, whilst the Deacon thinks of one.

DEACON SEBASTIAN

Goodbye Francis.

The Deacon gets up and slowly steps out of the confessional leaving behind the Bishop sitting there paralyzed like a rock still gathering his thoughts.