

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

The Lord Jesus came to reconcile us to His Father. This was His primary work as our Savior. The Church celebrates four Sacraments by which the Lord Jesus accomplishes this task.

The first Sacrament of Reconciliation is Baptism. Through water and the Spirit, our sins are washed away and we are reborn as children of God.

In Eucharist, we celebrate the memorial of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Through this saving event we are present to this great saving moment in history and we experience the forgiveness of sin.

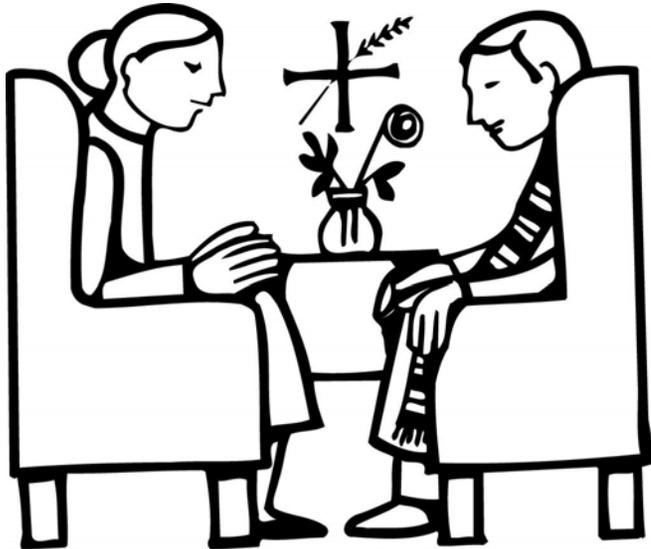
The Sacrament of the Sick is an encounter with Christ, the healer. We experience His healing power and our sins are forgiven (*James 5: 14-15*).

In the Sacrament of Penance we experience the forgiveness of Christ most keenly. Penitents, especially those aware of serious and mortal sin in their lives, come to the Church to receive the gift the risen Lord entrusted to us. For on Easter Sunday, He appeared to His apostles even though the doors of the place where they had gathered were locked. Christ greeted them saying, "Peace be with you!" Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven..." (*John 20: 20-23*)

In the Sacrament of Penance we come not only to receive the gift of forgiveness but the peace the risen Lord imparts to us.

This booklet has been prepared for you in hopes that, through the Sacrament of Penance, you will experience the real power of reconciliation that comes through the forgiveness of our sins and the genuine peace that flows from this wonderful gift.

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE



**PREPARING TO CELEBRATE
THE
SACRAMENT OF PENANCE**

Before entering the Reconciliation Chapel to confess our sins, penitents use prayer and Scripture to examine their lives. The following prayers, Scripture passages and questions are intended to help penitents, young and old, in this task.

O God, you enlighten every heart with the gift of your Spirit. Help me to know my sins and to trust in your mercy! Grant this through Christ, our Lord!

OR

Lord Jesus, welcome me into the arms of your mercy. You came to call sinners and to heal the wounds of sin. Fill me with the light of your Spirit and confidence in the goodness of your mercy, for you are Lord forever and ever.

OR

Come, Holy Spirit, reveal to me the truth of my life. Help me to see myself as my heavenly Father sees me. Help me to search through the actions and attitudes of my life.

Help me to recognize those moments of grace that have enabled me to grow in your life since my last celebration of this Sacrament of mercy.

Although it may be uncomfortable, help me to see how I have consciously failed to love. Give me the courage to confess my sin. But most of all, console me with your merciful love that will enable me to become more like Christ, the Lord.

Amen

SCRIPTURE

Listen as the Lord speaks to us about the call to repentance and reconciliation:

I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their body and replace it with a natural heart, so that they will live according to my ways, and observe and carry out my commandments; thus they shall be my people and I will be their God. (*Ezekiel 11:19-20*)

After John the Baptizer's arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the good news of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform you lives and believe in the gospel!" (*Mark 1:14-15*)

If you forgive the sins of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you. (*Matthew 6: 14-15*)

It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now that we have been justified by his blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by him... (*Romans 5: 8-9*)

If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we are liars and do not act in truth. But if we walk in light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his son, Jesus, cleanses us from all sin. But if we confess our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong. (*1 John 1:6-7,9*)

An Examination of Conscience for Adults

"I am the Lord, your God, you shall not have strange gods before me." "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain." "Tell me your ultimate concern and I will name the god who governs your life!" [Paul Tillich] What role does God have in the way I live my daily life? What is the most important concern in my life? Do I have other gods in my life; myself, work, money, success, sports, popularity, and the like? Do the priorities in my life reflect God as my only Master? Do I really believe and trust in Divine Providence? Do I seek the help of God in making decisions? Have I been blaming God for my troubles? Have I used the name of God reverently? Do I honestly try to follow the will of God in my life, or do I merely pay lip service to God?

"Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day." Jesus said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you!" [Jn 6] Have I rejected Christ by deliberately missing Mass and the opportunity to receive Him in Communion? Am I responsible for my dependant children missing Mass or religious education? Have I made it a regular practice to come late for Mass or to leave early? Do I prepare to really participate in the Sunday Eucharist? Have I failed to keep holy the Lord's Day by doing unnecessary work on Sunday? Do I take time to thank God for His many blessings? Do I take time to pray; and to read and reflect on the Word of God? Have I offered gifts to God without being reconciled with others?

"Honor your father and mother" As an adult do I honor and respect my parents? While I may not give them all the time or attention they would like, am I attentive to them in their need? Do I respect my children as individuals? Are my expectations for them realistic? Have I been respectful to those in authority, whoever they may be; employers, civil officials, the police, my elders? Do I respect and observe laws and regulations set out for the common good -- even when I do not understand or totally agree with them? Do I exercise authority that is vested in me justly and responsibly?

"You shall not kill." Do I respect and value all life? Do I really believe that all life is a gift from God? Do I do or say things that hurt others deliberately? Do I treat others as people deserving respect? Do I harbor prejudice against other people? Do I engage in name calling, sarcasm, and putting others down? Have I apologized for the hurts that I have caused? Have I done anything to repair the harm that I have done to others? Do I take care of my health? Do I abuse my body with alcohol, drugs or tobacco? Do I engage in negative, self-defeating behavior? Do I give into discouragement or despair?

"You shall not commit adultery." Have I engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage? Do I see or speak of or use others as sexual objects? Do I speak of sex with respect? Do I dress appropriately and modestly? Do I seek to love or simply to be loved? Am I selfish in my loving? Do I really care about others? Do I use them to obtain things I want? Do I see Christ in other people and treat them accordingly? Do I value my marriage? Do I make an honest effort to build a deeper relationship with my spouse?

"You shall not steal. You shall not covet." Have I stolen or defrauded others of those things that belonged to them? Do I take things that don't belong to me or use them without permission? Have I returned what I stole or have I paid for it? Have I taken part in vandalism? Have I paid for any damage deliberately done? Do I give an honest day's work for a day's pay? Do I engage in shoplifting? Do I steal small items from my place of work? Am I envious of others' possessions? Am I greedy and selfish about having money or things?

"You shall not bear false witness." Have I honored my word and my promises? Have I lied or spoken the truth hurtfully?

Have I cheated on my taxes? Do I blame others for my wrongdoing? Am I truthful with my spouse or employers or friends? Do I forgive? Have I violated confidences or secrets? Have I intentionally hurt another's reputation? Do I gossip?

"Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be" Do I develop my gifts and talents? Do others benefit or just me? Do I share my time and financial resources with the Church and other charities?

An Examination of Conscience for Younger People

How important is God to me? Are there other gods in my life like; myself, things, success, popularity, sports, friends? Do I really believe and trust in God? Do I seek the help of God in making decisions? Have I blamed God for my troubles? Have I used God's name without respect? Do I honestly try to follow the way of Jesus in my life or do I merely talk about it? Would Jesus recognize me as one of His followers?

Is Sunday a special day in my week? Do I honor the resurrection of Jesus and think about its importance to me? Have I rejected Christ by deliberately missing Mass and the opportunity to receive Him in Communion? When I come to Mass, do I join in the prayers and songs? Do I argue with my mom or dad about going to Mass or religious ed classes? Do I take the time to thank God for His many blessings? Do I take time to pray; to read and think about the Gospel?

Do I honor and respect my parents in the way I talk to them and in the way I act toward them? Am I respectful to those in authority like teachers, hall monitors, baby-sitters, the police, my elders? Do I try to follow the rules even when I do not understand or totally agree with them? When I am in charge, do I treat others fairly?

Do I have respect for my own life? Do I think it is alright to hurt or kill another person? Do I think poorly of others because of

their race or because they belong to a different group? Do I hurt others intentionally or without thinking? Do I treat others with respect? Do I engage in name calling, sarcasm, and putting others down? Have I apologized for the hurt that I have caused? Have I done anything to repair the harm that I have done to others?

Do I use other people in any way? Do I have respect for my own body? How important are clothes to me? Do I try to love others or only expect to be loved? Am I selfish? Am I really interested in other people or do I use them to obtain things I want? Do I see Christ in others?

Have I stolen or cheated others? Do I take even small things that don't belong to me at home or at school? Do I engage in shoplifting? Do I use other people's things without permission? Have I returned or paid for what I have stolen or taken? Have I taken part in vandalism? Have I paid for any damage deliberately done? Am I greedy and selfish about money or having things? Am I envious of what others have?

*Now that you have reviewed your life, you are ready to enter the
Reconciliation Chapel to celebrate the Sacrament.*

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Enter the reconciliation chapel & greet the confessor. Then:

In the name of the + Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

The confessor will pray a short prayer.

Then you begin:

Father, it has been since my last confession, these are my sins.....

Here mention all the sins you can remember.

When you are finished say:

I am truly sorry for all my sins.

The priest will then talk with you and give you a penance.

Then you pray an Act of Contrition:

**My God, I am sorry for all my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you,
whom I should love above all things.**

**I firmly intend with your help
to do penance,
to sin no more
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen**

OR

**Lord Jesus,
you chose to be called the friend of sinners.
By your saving death and resurrection
free me from my sins.
May your peace take root in my heart
and bring forth a harvest
of love, holiness and truth.**

OR

**Lord Jesus,
you opened the eyes of the blind,
healed the sick,
forgave the sinner,
and after Peter's denial,
you confirmed him in your love.
Listen to my prayer:
forgive all my sins,
renew your love in my heart,
help me to live in greater unity
with my fellow Christians
that I may proclaim your saving power to all.**

The confessor will then pray the prayer of absolution, ending with: "...AND I ABSOLVE YOU FROM ALL YOUR SINS, IN THE + NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

You respond: **Amen!**

The confessor will say: Go in the peace of Christ!

You respond: **Thanks be to God!**

The penitent leaves the reconciliation chapel to perform the penance.