

# **THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

## **Information for Parents whose Children will receive this Sacrament for the first time.**

1. Who receives this Sacrament? People who have been baptized receive this sacrament. People who want forgiveness from God for their sins. People who are not afraid of the truth. People who want to improve their lives on earth, and their chances of going to heaven.
2. What is this Sacrament of Reconciliation? It is one of seven signs of God's love, instituted by Christ, intended to give grace (divine assistance). This sacrament has been entrusted by Christ to His Church (His people). This sacrament is specifically for the forgiveness of the sins we commit after our Baptism. This sacrament can be received again and again. It is effective for both the forgiveness of major sins, and for overcoming our minor ones. Both saints and sinners benefit from Reconciliation/ going to Confession/ making Penance.
3. When do people receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Children are introduced to this sacrament at about the age of reason, in connection with their preparation for First Holy Communion. After their First Penance, everyone should come to Confession once or twice a year. The special times when our parish has Communal Penance Services (prayer services in common followed by individual confession) are Advent (before Christmas) and Lent (before Easter). We arrange to hear the children's confessions twice each year during their school time with us.
4. Where is the Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrated? Confessions are heard in the Room of Reconciliation in the back of church every Saturday from 3:45 to 4:45. If there are many people we also use the confessional boxes. The advantage of the Room of Reconciliation is that the person coming in has the choice of kneeling anonymously behind a screen, or sitting and talking to the priest face to face. Priests also hear confessions whenever and wherever people ask them to - in the rectory, hospital rooms, funeral homes, even outdoors.
5. Why should an adult want to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Because every once in awhile we need to admit the truth about our lives and our relationships, decide how to improve them, and enlist God's grace in helping us make them better. Any clear look at our habits, attitudes, and actions shows some weaknesses that hurt our relationships with other people and with God. We call them faults, failures, or mistakes; in some cases they are sins. A sin offends both God and other people, and of course, sin also negatively affects the sinner. Sin is our enemy; it flourishes when we deny its existence and power. Sin corrupts

relationships, and eventually breaks people apart from each other and from God. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is medicine for the sickness caused by sin. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is healing for a sin-sick soul.

6. **How does a person go to Confession?** The easiest way is to learn a pattern (and use it often enough so you do not forget.) We teach a pattern to the children, and will teach it to you tonight too. But don't let fear or forgetfulness keep you away. Even if all you can say to the priest is that you want to make a good confession, we priests will help you to clear your soul and restore your relationship with God and others.
7. ***The new Catechism of the Catholic Church*** calls reconciliation a Sacrament of Healing, and emphasizes that sacramental forgiveness of sins has an important communitarian dimension: "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are at the same time reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins" (1422). Sin is above all an offense against God, but it also damages or even ruptures communion with the Church. Therefore, true conversion of heart entails both God's forgiveness and ecclesial reconciliation.
8. The process of repentance and conversion whereby we human beings move from selfishness to new obedience and trust in God was described by Jesus in the wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son [in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15]. Despite the focus on the son, the real central character is the merciful father. He represents God our Father, who wants us back) who understands our youthful indiscretions, who is always ready to forgive and celebrate our return but who also appreciates and approves the faithful service of those who do not stray.
9. A liturgical action- a church prayer - is the ordinary and most satisfying way that reconciliation is accomplished. For large or small offenses, we need three things: **contrition** [sorrow for sin and resolution not to sin again] **confession** [disclosure of sin, which frees and opens us to take responsibility to sin no more] and **satisfaction or penance** [to repair if possible the harm we have done, and to reinforce our plans for future good] A penance can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service to neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all, patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. God does the rest by forgiving our sins through the ministry of his Church. That is the wonderful good news about this sacrament of forgiveness and healing and grace.