

# ***Penance or Reconciliation***

## **FOR PARISHIONERS:**

**First Confession is received by our second graders, both those enrolled at our school and in our PSR program. Children must be in a sacramental preparation program for at least two years.**

**For adults and children wanting to go to confession, Father hears confessions before the Saturday evening Mass from 4:15-4:45pm. There is also a reconciliation service at church both during the Lenten and Advent seasons.**

**If you need to need to make a confession at another time, please contact the parish office @ 573-483-2555 to arrange.**

Below is some information about the Sacrament of penance. To learn more about this special sacrament, please read.

## **What is Penance or Reconciliation?**

It is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in his love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time, sinners reconcile with the Church and others, because they are also wounded by our sins. Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people, and God. In Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and his Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and his Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future. It is the sacrament of spiritual healing for the soul and a way to regain the grace of God lost by sin.

## **Guide for Confession**

Through penance, the faithful receive pardon through God's mercy for the sins they have committed. At the same time, they are reconciled with the Church community. The confession, or disclosure, of sins frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others.

The basic requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the "prodigal son" and to acknowledge our sins with the true sorrow before the priest.

Be truly sorry for your sins. The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God and which is reborn with repentance. The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. This does not mean that a promise never to fall again into sin is necessary. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

Resolve to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation often. We Catholics are fortunate to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is the ordinary way for us to have our sins forgiven. This sacrament is a powerful help to get rid of our weaknesses, grow in holiness, and lead a balanced and virtuous life.

# Examination of Conscience

Before going to Confession, you should make a review of mortal and venial sins since your last sacramental confession, and should express sorrow for sins, hatred for sins and a firm resolution not to sin again. A helpful pattern for examination of conscience is to review the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church.

## The Differences in Sins

As a result of Original Sin, human nature is weakened. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, takes away Original Sin, and turns us back toward God. The consequences of this weakness and the inclination to evil persist, and we often commit personal or actual sin. Actual sin is sin which people commit. There are two kinds of actual sin, mortal and venial. Mortal sin is a deadly offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul. Three simultaneous conditions must be fulfilled for a mortal sin: 1) the act must be something very serious; 2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done; 3) the person must have sufficient freedom of the will.

## What Does Forgiveness of Sins Involve?

It involves four parts:

**Contrition:** a sincere sorrow for having offended God is the most important act of the penitent. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.

**Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way to God by confessing them to a priest.

**Penance:** an important part of our healing is the penance the priest imposes in reparation for our sins.

**Absolution:** the priest speaks the words by which 'God, the Father of Mercies' reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the Cross.

## Who Can Administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Only a priest can administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many individuals have a difficult time receiving this sacrament because they are fearful that the priest will think less of them for committing that "serious" sin. Chances are that what you need to confess has been heard by the priest many times before. We are all sinners, including the priest who hears your confession. He understands the difficulty that you are going through if it has been a long time since your last confession. His major concern is to help you to experience God's loving forgiveness and healing.