

Reconciliation

Headline: Resistant to reconciliation? Reconciliation is a Sacrament that many Catholics tend to exclude from their lives. Many of us grew up and “went to confession” because either our parents or teachers told us to. Going to confession was often an uncomfortable act and has not often been included often in our faith lives.

Objective: Let’s get a better understanding of the Catholic roots for this often misunderstood sacrament and develop an intentional plan to increase our participation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the true path to a deeper relationship with our Lord.

Song Suggestion: Amazing Grace

Bible and Catechism Readings:

John 21:21-23

Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.

Matthew 6:14-15

If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

1 John 1:8-9

If we say, “We are without sin,” we deceive ourselves,* and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

Matthew 9:6-8

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” And the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.

This verse shows that God has given the authority to forgive sins to “men.” Hence, those Protestants who acknowledge that the apostles had the authority to forgive sins (which this verse demonstrates) must prove that this gift ended with the apostles. Otherwise, the apostles’ successors still possess this gift. Where in Scripture is the gift of authority to forgive sins taken away from the apostles or their successors?

Catechism 1420

” Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life “in earthen vessels,” and it remains “hidden with Christ in God.” We are still in our “earthly tent,” subject to suffering, illness, and death. This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin.”

Catechism 1422

“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 and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion.”

Catechism 1441

" Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven." Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name."

Catechism 1442

" Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation." The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."

Saint: Padre Pio A patron saint for Penance and Reconciliation Pio of Pietrelcina, better known as Padre Pio, was a popular Franciscan priest and beloved confessor. His spiritual life was centered on the Eucharist, prayer, and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Most of his day was spent in the confessional. People waited for hours, days, and sometimes weeks to confess to Padre Pio. He changed people's lives and filled their hearts with joy and peace. He led countless individuals to God through his holiness and compassion for others.

Vignette: – Roger was a faithful catholic and was growing in faith. He attended mass regularly, was active in his parish but had not gone to confession for many years. He was intimidated by it, and quite frankly felt he was OK just asking God for forgiveness directly. After listening to a Dr. Scott Hahn podcast about confession focused on his book, *Lord, Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession*, he felt compelled to go to confession again for the first time in over 10 years. After going to reconciliation, he felt more peace than he can ever remember and now goes once a month.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Have you had a bad reconciliation experience? If so, what happened?
2. Discuss positive reconciliation experiences. What made it special and how did it make you feel?
3. Discuss ideas to improve the reconciliation preparation and experience.

Resources:

[How to Go to Confession: A Step-by-Step Guide for Everyone – Ascension](#)

[Lord Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession — Dr. Scott Hahn - The Official Site](#)

In *Lord, Have Mercy: The Healing Power of Confession*, Scott Hahn explores the sacrament of reconciliation and shows why it is the key to spiritual growth. Drawing on the history of ancient Israel, the Gospels, the writings of the early Church, and the lives of the saints, Hahn reveals the living, scriptural heart of the Church's teachings on penance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

[The Sacrament of Reconciliation; The True Path to a Deeper Relationship with our Lord. - Blog - News - Catholic Online](#)

Additional Information

Why do Catholics find it necessary to confess to a Priest?

- The bible verses above demonstrate to need to confess to the successors of the apostles....today's priest
- As Catholics, we believe that the priest is acting "in persona Christi" (in the person of Christ) during the sacrament of reconciliation. During the sacrament of Reconciliation, we are confessing to Christ....not a man.
- The concept of "perfect contrition" – Perfect contrition means that we are sorry for our sins out of love for God and truly sorry for having offended him, not because we fear retribution or going to hell. It is nearly impossible for us as humans to be perfectly contrite. This is evidenced by our continuing to commit the same sins over and over.
Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest is given the authority to forgive our sins even when we are not perfectly contrite.

Why should I go to confession on a regular basis?

- The Church recommends that we go to confession at least once per year or whenever a "grave" sin is committed.
- Going more frequently, every two or three months, helps us identify our "favorite sins". If you find yourself confessing the same things over and over, you can zero in on problem behaviors and make corrective action.

How do I make a good confession?

- Try to find a good Priest to go to regularly. One that is not too tough but not too easy either.
- Pray for 15 minutes before going to confession, in front of the Blessed Sacrament if you can.
- Concentrate on the Ten Commandments.
- If you are not sure if something is a sin or not, it probably is. Confess it!

Step it up!:

Discuss road blocks to reconciliation. Develop personal objectives to increase participation. At minimum, try to commit to reconciliation during Lent and Advent. Ideal goals would be 4 times per year or more.

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