

4. PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK: God's Mercy Revealed

When he told his Apostles after the Resurrection, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven," (John 20:23), he gave them authority to bestow the Father's tangible mercy to all generations that follow.

Lord, you invite all who are burdened to come to you.
Allow your healing hand to heal me.
Touch my soul with your compassion for others.
Touch my heart with your courage and infinite love for all.
Touch my mind with your wisdom,
that my mouth may always proclaim your praise.
Teach me to reach out to you in my need,
and help me to lead others to you by my example.
Most loving heart of Jesus,
bring me health in body and spirit
that I may serve you with all my strength.
Touch gently this life which you have created,
now and forever. Amen. (www.ourcatholicfaith.org)

In the parable of the Prodigal Son we see the perfect image of Confession wherein the repentant son is welcomed back by the great love of the Father. Confession helps us prepare for our inevitable death helping us to recognise and choose the grace of forgiveness instead of temptation and rejecting God's love. Receiving absolution at the point of death ensures that we die in a state of grace and will one day enter heaven.

There is much evidence of confession in the early Church, which is a remarkable development since, at that time, it was well understood that only God could forgive sin. The power to forgive sin, which Jesus gave to the Apostles and their successors, opens to us the otherwise unattainable opportunity for personal reconciliation with God.

Our disposition to accept the offer of forgiveness in confession is always our choice and may give us an insight into the choice offered to us at the time of our death. To make a good confession we need to be contrite, to verbalise our sin, and have the desire to make reparation. The Priest who hears our confession acts as Christ helping us to be neither too lax, nor too harsh, and through the words of absolution we receive the Sacramental assurance of God's pardon and forgiveness and the assurance that our penance brings reconciliation and healing. In this way we form a healthy conscience.

Christ gave the apostles the power of healing. We should not limit this healing to just physical healing, but should also recognise the more important Spiritual healing and forgiveness. Anointing is a source of grace and hope at times of serious illness.

Video Links:

A Guide to Confession - Catholic Jacks (7.5 mins) <https://youtu.be/xO13FAt538U>
Confession is a Place of Victory – Fr Mike Schmitz (8 mins) <https://youtu.be/YiVjwIUO9Sc>
Making a good confession - Fr Mike Schmitz (7 mins) <https://youtu.be/GCmumpsrwBE>
Mortal vs Venial sin - Fr Mike Schmitz (7 mins) <https://youtu.be/eGghX65-9Zg>

Sacraments 101: Anointing of the Sick – Busted Halo (6.5 mins)

<https://youtu.be/hEppjWNO2y4>

Anointing of the Sick – Catholic Productions (7 mins) <https://youtu.be/7HgEXIKH3ig>

Suggested Scripture readings: Psalm 32; 1 John 1:8–10; Matthew 18:18

Reading:

Lumen Gentium - POPE PAUL VI - 21 November 1964

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

An Act of Contrition. This prayer should be memorized by all who will be receiving the sacrament.

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee,
and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments,
but most of all because they offend thee, my God,
who art all-good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace,
to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.
Amen.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING

ARTICLE 4

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

II. WHY A SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION AFTER BAPTISM?

1425 "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."⁹ One must appreciate the magnitude of the gift God has given us in the sacraments of Christian initiation in order to grasp the degree to which sin is excluded for him who has "put on Christ."¹⁰ But the apostle John also says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."¹¹ And the Lord himself taught us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses,"¹² linking our forgiveness of one another's offenses to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us.

1426 *Conversion* to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us "holy and without blemish," just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is "holy and without blemish."¹³ Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls *concupiscence*, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life.¹⁴ This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.¹⁵

III. THE CONVERSION OF THE BAPTIZED

1427 Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."¹⁶ In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism¹⁷ that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

1428 Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal."¹⁸ This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a "contrite heart,"

drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.¹⁹

1429 St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him.²⁰ The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!"²¹

St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance."²²

9 1 Cor 6:11.

10 Gal 3:27.

11 1 Jn 1:8.

12 Cf. Lk 11:4; Mt 6:12.

13 Eph 1:4; 5:27.

14 Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515.

15 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545; LG 40.

16 Mk 1:15.

17 Cf. Acts 2:38.

18 LG 8 § 3.

19 Ps 51:17; cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32; 1 Jn 4:10.

20 Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17.

21 Rev 2:5,16.

22 St. Ambrose, *ep.* 41,12:PL 16,1116.

VI. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

1440 Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.³⁸

Only God forgives sin

1441 Only God forgives sins.³⁹ 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."⁴⁰ Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.⁴¹

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."⁴² The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."⁴³

Reconciliation with the Church

1443 During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.⁴⁴

1444 In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."⁴⁵ "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head."⁴⁶

1445 The words *bind and loose* mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.*

The sacrament of forgiveness

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."⁴⁷

1447 Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to

a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

1448 Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same *fundamental structure* is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion.

1449 The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church expresses the essential elements of this sacrament: the Father of mercies is the source of all forgiveness. He effects the reconciliation of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church:

God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and the resurrection of his Son
has reconciled the world to himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God give you pardon and peace,
and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the
Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

38 Cf. *LG* 11.

39 Cf. *Mk* 2:7.

40 *Mk* 2:5,10; *Lk* 7:48.

41 Cf. *Jn* 20:21-23.

42 2 *Cor* 5:18.

43 2 *Cor* 5:20.

44 Cf. *Lk* 15; 19:9.

45 *Mt* 16:19; cf. *Mt* 18:18; 28:16-20.

46 *LG* 22 § 2.

47 Tertullian, *De Paenit.* 4,2:PL 1,1343; cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1542.

48 *OP* 46: formula of absolution.

The Anointing of the Sick CCC 1499-1532

https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c2a5.htm