

The Teaching of the Church on the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Jesus began his risen life by giving his apostles power to forgive sins (cf John 20:23). The sacrament of reconciliation continues his work of forgiving and reconciling.

The catechism tells us:

- CCC1425 . . . But the apostle John says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 Jn 1:8) And the Lord himself taught us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses" linking our forgiveness of one another's offences to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us.
- CCC1427 Jesus calls us 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." (Mk 1:15)
- CCC1458 Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be more merciful as he is merciful.

The Rite of Penance tells us:

- The sacrament's traditional and essential elements are contrition, confession, absolution, and satisfaction. Contrition is heartfelt sorrow and aversion from sin as an offence against God, with the firm intention of sinning no more. It expresses a conversion, "a profound change of the whole person by which one begins to consider, judge and arrange" one's whole life to conform more with Christ's values. (*Rite of Penance*, Introduction, n. 8).
- The sacrament of reconciliation, including individual and complete confession and absolution, remains the ordinary way of reconciling the faithful with God and with the Church. The Church holds and teaches that this method of receiving the sacrament is necessary and willed by Christ. Individual confession and absolution cannot be easily or ordinarily set aside. Particular, occasional circumstances may render it lawful and even necessary to give general absolution to a number of penitents without their previous individual confession, though the obligation to confess serious sin still remains. The existence of these serious circumstances is identified by the local bishop in consultation with other bishops according to articles 31 and 32 of the *Rite of Penance*.

The Catechism tell us:

CCC1440 Sin is before all else an offence 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.

CCC1423 It is called the **sacrament of conversion** because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father⁵ from whom one has strayed by sin. It is called the **sacrament of Penance**, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.

CCC1424 It is called the **sacrament of confession**, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession" - acknowledgment and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

It is called the **sacrament of forgiveness**, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace." It is called the **sacrament of Reconciliation**, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God." He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother."