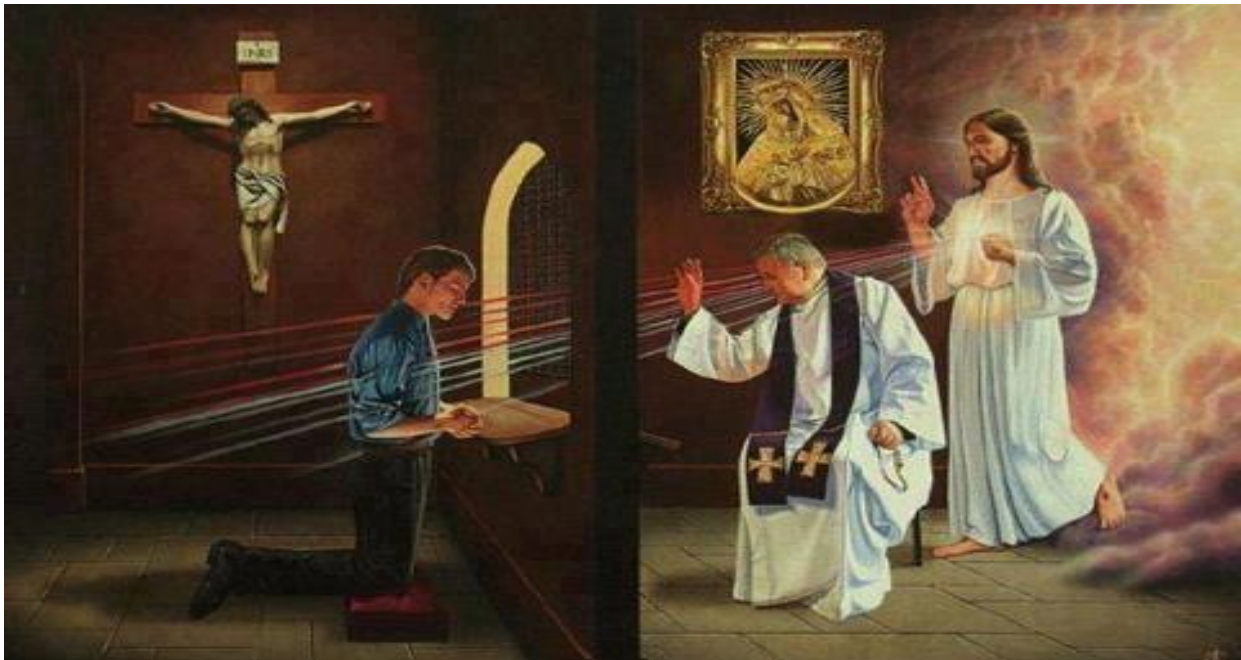


Lesson 19

Sacraments of Healing

The “Sacraments of Healing” are comprised of two sacraments: Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. As the name of this category implies, these sacraments bring about spiritual healing. It is through these sacraments that the people of God can experience the healing hand of Christ in their lives. Both of these sacraments forgive sin; therefore, only priests and bishops can administer them to the faithful.

Reconciliation



Reconciliation is a sacrament we can receive over and over again, but many people hesitate to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. It isn't surprising since no one likes to confess they did anything wrong. People feel that "it's embarrassing" and "What if the priest judges me?" This fear leads to hesitation and fosters the mindset of "it isn't really a sin; God will forgive me anyway."

We all sin. That is why Jesus died on the cross; to save us from our sins. Reconciliation is a sacramental way to admit our mistakes, receive forgiveness, and try again. There is nothing more refreshing and hopeful than going to Reconciliation. This is why the Church highly recommends that individuals frequently take advantage of the sacrament.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the sacrament that gives us God's forgiveness for the sins that we have committed. It is sometimes referred to as "Penance" or "Confession." This is because part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation involves the penitent (*the person confessing their sins*) making a confession of his or her sins. Another crucial part of

Reconciliation is for the penitent to complete a penance, which is an act of charity in order to help make amends for their sinful behavior. Penance usually consists of either prayers and/or acts of kindness.

We are all in need of healing because of the existence of sin in our lives. Every day we make decisions about whether to live in harmony with God and with others. We can destroy this harmony and break our relationships by acts of disobedience, pride, and self-centeredness.

God calls us to repentance and a true conversion of heart in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we repent because we love God above all else, it is called “perfect contrition.” In other words, perfect contrition is true sorrow for having offended God and hatred for the sins committed. “Imperfect contrition” (*also called, “Attrition”*) is being sorry for sins due to fear of God’s punishment or Hell.

There are two essential elements for a valid confession and for Absolution (the forgiveness of sins):

1. The person must have a **contrite (sorrowful) heart**. In other words, the penitent must be sorrow for the sins committed.
2. The person must have a **willingness to change (reform)** their lives. In other words, the penitent must be willing to have a conversion of heart.

Absolution is the forgiveness we receive from God through the priest. The priest is in “Persona Christi” (*meaning “in the person of Christ”*). In other words, Jesus is working through the priest. What is said between the penitent and the priest falls under what is called the “Seal of Confession.” With the Seal of Confession, under no circumstances can the priest reveal what was said in the confessional. Any priest who would tell another person something he had learned in the confessional would be excommunicated (*cut off from the Church*), even to a police officer about a crime that was committed.



The following chart summarizes the effects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These are the spiritual benefits that we receive from the sacrament.



THE FIVE EFFECTS OF CONFESSION



It reconciles us with God and the Church

We regain the grace we lost because of sin and we recover the relationship with our Mother, the Church.



We are forgiven

We receive the forgiveness of all our sins (mortal and venial).



It reduces Purgatory time

Confessing diminishes, at least in part, the time we should be in Purgatory for our venial sins.



It gives us peace

Confession gives us the peace of conscience and spiritual consolation we long for,



It strengthens us

It provides us with the strength we need for our spiritual combat.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS



CatholicLink

SOURCE: CONECTACEC.COM

Before a penitent enters the confessional to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, he or she should make a thorough examination of conscience. An examination of conscience is the act of prayerfully thinking about what we have said or done in light of what the Gospel asks of us. We also must think about how our actions may have hurt our relationship with God or with others whether it was in thought, word, or deed. There are several tools that we can use to guide our examination of conscience: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Seven Deadly Sins, the virtues, and the teachings of the Church.

There are many ways in which to examine one's conscience. It doesn't matter which method that you use, as long as you are preparing yourself mentally and spiritually to make a good confession. The following questions, based on the Ten Commandments, are good to reflect upon when making an examination of conscience:

My Relationship with God

What steps am I taking to help myself grow closer to God and to others?
Do I turn to God often during the day, especially when I am tempted?
Do I put an activity, person, or myself above God?
Do I pray every day?
Do I participate at Mass with attention and devotion on Sundays?
Do I attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation?
Do I use the names of God, Jesus, Mary, and the saints with love and reverence?

My Relationships with Others

Have I set a bad example through my words and/or actions?
Do I treat others fairly and with respect?
Do I spread stories or gossip that hurt the reputation of others?
Am I loving to those in my family?
Am I respectful of my neighbors, friends, and those in authority?
Do I show respect for my body and for the bodies of others?
Do I keep away from forms of entertainment that do not respect God's gift of sexuality?
Have I taken or damaged anything that did not belong to me?
Have I cheated, stole, or lied?
Do I quarrel with others just so I can get my own way?
Do I insult others to try to make them think they are less than I am?
Do I hold grudges and try to hurt people who I think hurt me?

How to go to Confession:

1. Make a Good Examination of Conscience. (*Before entering the Confessional*)
2. Enter the confessional, knee or sit down, make the sign of the cross, and say:
"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It has been (Length of Time) since my last confession. These are my sins..."
3. Tell the priest your sins. When confessing your sins, be specific and avoid unnecessary details and/or background information.
4. The priest will give you a Penance (*something for you to pray or do*) as a response to God's mercy.
5. The priest will then ask you to pray the Act of Contrition out loud, demonstrating your sorrow for your sins.

6. The priest will extend his hand in your direction and pray the Prayer of Absolution. Your response at the end of the prayer is: "Amen."
7. The priest will usually say, "God has freed you from your sins. Go in peace." Your response should be, "Thanks be to God."

Note: Sometimes the priest might say, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good." In this case, your response should be, "His mercy endures forever."

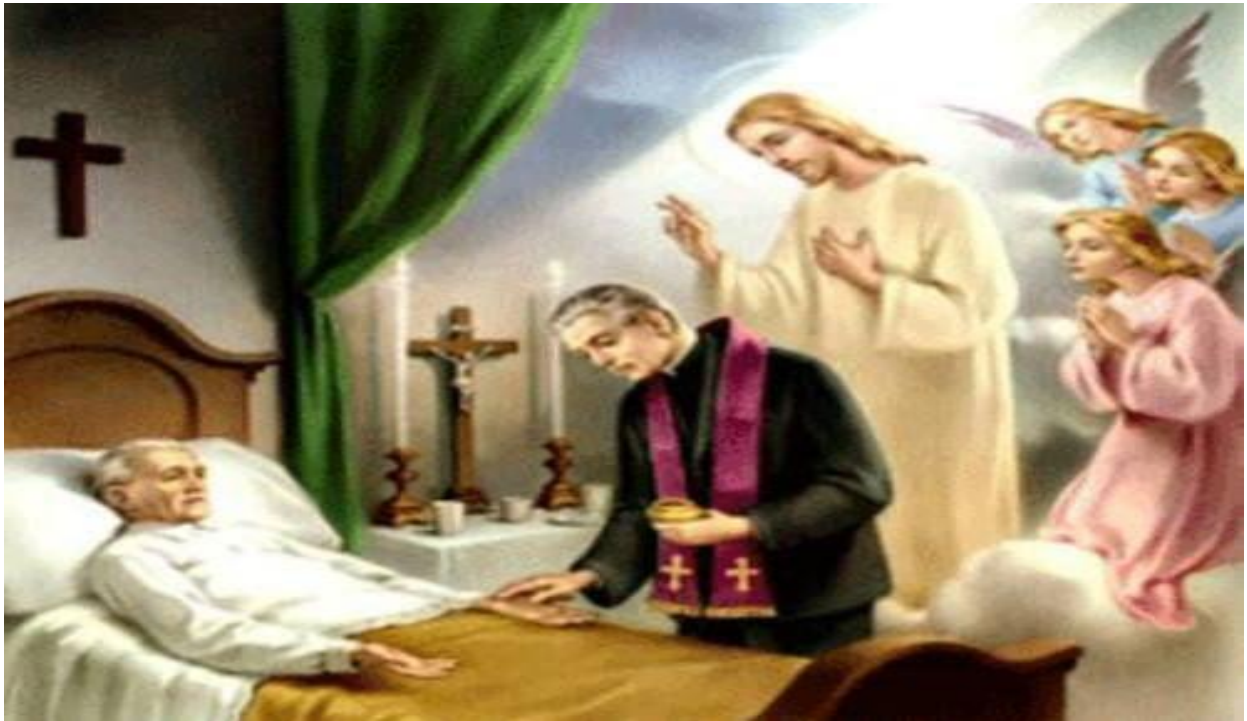
8. Leave the confessional and perform your Penance as soon as possible.

**THE TRUTH WILL
SET YOU FREE**

There are many different forms of the Act of Contrition prayer. It does not matter which version of the prayer you say because they all have the two essential parts: a statement about our contrition and a statement about our resolve to amend (*or change*) our life. The following is one form of the Act of Contrition:

**My God, I am sorry for my sins
with all my heart. In choosing to
do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom
I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with the help of
Your help, to do penance,
to sin no more, and to avoid
whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God,
have mercy. Amen.**

Anointing of the Sick



This sacrament unites a sick person's suffering with those of Jesus and brings healing and forgiveness of sins. A person is anointed with the "oil of the sick" and receives the laying on of hands from a priest. This sacrament is also referred to as "Last Rites" or "Extreme Unction." Through the Anointing of the Sick, the person gains the strength to fight the temptation of sin and receives strength for the journey into the next life. The sacrament is administered to those who are in danger of death, those who are seriously ill, and those about to undergo surgery.

The Anointing of the Sick is the sacrament that helps unite those who are suffering with Jesus' saving and healing power. Through this sacrament people receive forgiveness for their sins and comfort in their suffering. They are restored in spirit and sometimes they even experience a return to full physical health. God wants us to give comfort to those who are suffering and wants us to work to relieve suffering where we can.

In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the priest anoints those who are seriously ill, injured, or aged with the oil of the sick. In addition to the anointing, the person sometimes receives the Eucharist. When the person is dying, Holy Communion is called "viaticum." For a person who is dying, the sacrament helps to prepare them for their journey into eternal life.

The Anointing of the Sick sometimes occurs in a church and is given to people who are sick or elderly in the community. It often takes place in homes, nursing homes, and hospitals. For example, a person who is going to have surgery may be anointed. This sacrament may be received more than once, such as when a person who is sick has a condition that worsens.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick produces the following effects:

1. It confers the grace of the Holy Spirit and unites the person with the Passion of Christ.
2. The sacrament strengthens the sick person spiritually.
3. It forgives all sins of the person.
4. The Anointing prepares the person for the final journey to eternal life.
5. The sacrament can provide restoration of health, if it is good for the salvation of the person's soul.



The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has its roots in Scriptures from the Epistle of Saint James. The same following verses are said during the sacrament:

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14-15)

In the Rite of the Anointing of the Sick, the priest anoints the sick person on the forehead, saying, "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen." He also anoints the sick person on the palm of each hand, saying, "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen." The "raising" refers to spiritual healing, as well as to any physical healing that may take place.