

The Light is ON for You

TheLightIsOn.org #TheLightIsON



The Misunderstood Sacrament of Confession – Penance – Reconciliation

William Shakespeare famously said, “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” This is a profound reminder to not get so bound in naming a thing that we miss its beauty and its essence. For many Catholics, it may be helpful to apply this wisdom to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. We may not know what to call this sacrament – confession, penance, reconciliation: more importantly, we may not understand that this is a beautiful sacrament of healing which gives us God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Confession, Penance and

Reconciliation are movements of the sacrament itself. Taking a closer look at each of these aspects may help free us from our misunderstanding or fears about the sacrament.

“One who is in line to confess himself feels all these things - even shame - but then, when he finishes confessing, he leaves free, great, beautiful, forgiven, [...] happy. And this is the beauty of Confession.”

Pope Francis

The confession of sins...

To celebrate the sacrament, we must take inventory of our actions, and inaction. The interior process of examining our consciences is an essential element of the sacrament which springs first from a spirit of contrition – sorrow in our souls for sins committed accompanied by a resolution to not sin again.

This is hard work as we bring to light those aspects of our lives that we know are sinful; however, it is the necessary first step to admit our faults and take responsibility for them so that we can be open to God’s mercy.

Penance

We are called to look at our daily actions in light of Christ’s call to holiness. A penitential spirit allows us to look with humility at our lives and expresses repentance for having done something that we know is contrary to our good and the good of others.

Sacramental penance, however, can only be fully understood in its relationship to conversion. The penance given to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not imposed as an outward act, but a call to conversion to Christ and his way of life. The penance we offer is a visible expression of the gratitude, peace and interior conversion we receive in the

Why confess your sins to a priest?

The Church uses the guidance of Scripture in seeking and offering forgiveness: “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16) and the appearance of Jesus to the apostles on Easter: “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you...Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained”

(cf John 20:21-23).

sacrament that reorients our life to God with all our heart through the forgiveness of our sins.

Reconciliation

Throughout his ministry Jesus, not only forgave sins, but he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God.

In sacramental reconciliation, the harmony of our relationships with God, others and self are all restored. Favorable circumstances for growth in the Christian life are reestablished.

To return to communion with God after having lost it through sin is a grace from God who desires the salvation of all. This is a most precious gift that is generously offered to us in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation.

Whatever we call this sacrament, it is a gift that begins and ends with God’s love for us.

Sub Rosa

(Latin for “under the rose”)

In older churches you may see the image of a rose over the door of a confessional. The rose is a reminder of the absolute confidentiality of the sacrament. A priest cannot, by word or sign or by any manner whatever in any way, reveal what he hears in a confession.