

The Light is ON for You

TheLightIsOn.org #TheLightIsON



2018 Parish Toolkit



All of these materials and more may be found electronically at
www.TheLightIsON.org and www.LaLuzENCENDIDA.org.



The Archdiocese of Washington



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Introduction to The Light is On 2018

The Light is On supports parishes as they bring people into an encounter with God's mercy through increased access to the Sacrament of Confession during Lent. Though this initiative has existed for over a decade, we continue to seek new and creative ways to draw people into God's ever-present grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In this toolkit are a few resources that may help your parish provide a warmer welcome to more visitors this Lent as they seek God's love and forgiveness. 10' x 3' banners have been ordered for each parish in the Archdiocese to serve as a welcome to passers-by. Examen Prayer cards and Pew cards have also been shipped to those who ordered them to provide visitors with a more prayerful experience.

Thank you for your role in keeping the light on this Lent across the entire DC area. If you have any questions about implementing The Light Is ON in your parish, feedback on the initiative, or if you need to request additional resources, please contact:

Anthony Esser, Coordinator of Parish Evangelization, Archdiocese of Washington
EsserA@adw.org (301) 853-5347

The Light is ON Parish Toolkit Outline:

1. Five Best Practices for The Light Is ON
2. Details on **Light The City** on February 17 with Cardinal Wuerl
3. How to participate in the **#getcloser** social media initiative
4. A Guide for Conducting a "How to Go to Confession" Workshop
5. Five Sample Bulletin and Pulpit Announcements
6. Five Sample Intercessions
7. The Examen Prayer Handout
8. The Light is On Catechetical Resources
9. The Light is On Bulletin Insert

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Five Best Practices for The Light Is On

1. Create a Welcoming Environment:

- Make sure the Church is warm and well-lit
- Assign greeters to distribute resources and help visitors find their way around
- If appropriate, provide water, coffee, tea or light snacks in a foyer or side room or even a 'give-away' book as a gift for all who participate

2. Create a Prayerful Environment

- Consider offering Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during confession times
- Invite parish groups to pray for penitents in the Church during confession times
- Consider having soft prayerful music playing like Chant or quiet instrumental hymns.

3. Personally Invite:

- Offer a personal invitation to at least one person a week to come to confession, especially during a penance service or time of adoration.
- Encourage parish leaders to be personal evangelizers and invite another person to confession
- Consider reaching out to a person or family who may not have felt welcome in the sacrament of reconciliation before like a person with special needs *See resources in the toolkit

4. Create an Expectation for Confession

- Challenge all your parishioners and/or your staff and ministry leaders go to confession this Lent.
- Consider preaching on the importance of confession on Ash Wednesday & throughout Lent
- Write articles or reflections about confession for your bulletin, newsletters, and website

5. Provide Resources and a Confession-Refresher:

- Consider offering a short (30 minutes) "How to Go to Confession" refresher workshop before Confessions begin. *See "How to Go to Confession" Workshop Guide in the toolkit
- On a table near the church entrance or the confessionals, provide helpful information and resources such as:
 - Parish celebrations for Holy Week and Easter, Lenten activities, etc.
 - Examen Cards and Examination of Conscience Pew cards

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February 17, 2018 at St. Matthew's Cathedral

We would like to invite your parish to join us, and Cardinal Wuerl, for **Light the City**, an evening of prayer and street evangelization.

Cardinal Wuerl will bless and send volunteers to the streets to invite anyone they meet to pray for peace, healing, and reconciliation. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for adoration while priests will be available for confession and spiritual conversations.

This is a wonderful opportunity for your parishioners of all ages to respond to the Lord's call to "Go out!" Alongside seminarians from the St. John Paul II seminary, priests, and religious, volunteers will get to experience being a missionary disciple.

Volunteers can also remain in the Church to pray for those out in the street and create a welcome environment for visitors.

Consider sending a group from your parish or promoting to your parishioners!

Please find the below Bulletin Announcement in digital format to copy and paste, as well as graphics for social media, and a digital copy of the flyer at adw.org/light



Bulletin Announcement:

Join Cardinal Wuerl on Saturday night, February 17th at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle for "Light the City", an evening of prayer and street evangelization from 8-11pm! Join us as a prayer warrior in the church or by going out to the streets to invite passers-by to come into the church to light a candle, pray for a loved one, or talk with a priest. Sign up to volunteer at adw.org/Light. You can also share your prayer intentions with us on Saturday evening on social media using #LighttheCity.

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JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Don't miss this opportunity to evangelize!

Encourage parishioners to participate and consider sharing a video yourself!

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

1. CHOOSE A QUESTION:

- A. HOW HAS CONFESSION HELPED YOU #GET CLOSER TO GOD?
- B. HOW HAS FORGIVING SOMEONE OR BEING FOR GIVEN HELPED YOU #GETCLOSER TO GOD?
- C. HOW HAS AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER HELPED YOU #GETCLOSER TO GOD?

2. FILM A 15-60 SECOND VIDEO SHARING YOUR STORY,

3. OR WRITE OUT YOUR STORY FOR A SOCIAL POST.

4. POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA USING #GETCLOSER!



Thank you!

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“How to Go to Confession” Workshop Guide

Background:

The Office of Evangelization learned of a parish-based initiative connected to The Light Is ON that has been quite successful over the past decade. Ten years ago the parish invited those offered a short half-hour presentation on “How to Go to Confession.” The workshop walked people through the steps and answered questions. The first week it was offered, the staff prepared for 20 people. 120 came and every year since 10-20 people attend the workshop, now offered annually 30 minutes before the Lenten Reconciliation Service.

Program:

We invite you to consider offering this opportunity on one of the Wednesday evenings in Lent or before your Reconciliation Service. The steps to a successful workshop are:

- Identifying the workshop leader
- Choosing the day and time (connected to the availability of the sacrament)
- Promoting the workshop through the parish bulletin, website, pulpit announcements
- Choosing a space to set up chairs
- Preparing to use role-play or walk-through to demonstrate the steps in the sacrament
- Allowing time for questions
- Invite people to make their way to the church for Confession

Resources/Equipment:

- Examination of Conscience pew cards provided by the archdiocese in connection with The Light Is ON.
- Three-minute Video presentation with Fr. Bill Byrne on the gift of reconciliation and how to go to Confession. <http://thelightison.org/guide-to-confession/>.
- A workshop leader. Please contact your Diocesan Contact (see first page) if you would like the names of workshop leaders available to offer the workshop at your parish.

See below for the Outline of the Steps for the Sacrament of Reconciliation page. The page may be copied or printed from www.TheLightIsON.org and used as a handout for participants during the workshop.

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Outline of the Steps for Sacrament of Reconciliation

For use during the “How to Go to Confession” Workshop in conjunction with the Confession Pew Cards

There are three basic components to consider in preparing for the Sacrament of Penance: sorrow for our sins, an examination of conscience followed by naming the sins brought to light to a priest, and finally the desire to make up for our sins and amend our lives.

Prayer and reflection before getting in line will help you to make a sincere and complete confession.

1. **Begin** with a prayer to be open to the Holy Spirit speaking in your heart.
2. **Examine your conscience** – consider your actions in light of Christ’s teaching. In light of Christ’s moral teaching be mindful of both the things you have done, and the things that you have failed to do. Remember sins are not merely broken rules, but are those actions that rupture our relationship with God and others. If you need more guidance, there are many models of examination of conscience based on the Beatitudes and/or Ten Commandments.
3. **Enter the confessional** and begin by making the Sign of the Cross and saying “Bless me Father for I have sinned,” followed by stating how long it has been since your last confession.
4. After the priest acknowledges your greeting, **confess your sins** and their frequency. The priest may ask clarifying questions or give you counsel.
5. The priest will ask you to **make an Act of Contrition**. If you have not memorized one of the Acts of Contrition of the Church, simply make a statement that acknowledges your sorrow for your sins and expresses your commitment to amend your life.
6. **Receive** the words of absolution from the priest. Listen carefully to this beautiful prayer of forgiveness. When it is complete, you respond, “Amen.”
7. The priest will dismiss you with a **sign of peace**.
8. In a spirit of thanksgiving **perform your penance** as soon as possible.

Take a Confession pew card to help you with the examination of conscience, the steps during Confession, and the Act of Contrition.

If, at any point during your confession you have questions, ask the priest for guidance! He is here to help you in this conversation.

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Bulletin and Pulpit Announcements

Ash Wednesday

Lots of people give something up for Lent, but Lent is not a fad diet, it is a time for reconciling with God. This Lent, I ask that each of you put going to Confession at the top of your Lenten to-do list! To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! Starting this week, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can find Lenten resources and view all the confession times across the region by using the Confession Finder map online at theLightIsON.org. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

1st Sunday of Lent

God created us for relationship with Him and one another. I invite you to renew your relationship with the Lord through the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lent. To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! This Lent, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can find Lenten resources and view all the confession times across the region by using the NEW Confession Finder map online at theLightIsON.org. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

2nd Sunday of Lent

Are you having difficulty forgiving an acquaintance or a loved one? Have you considered seeking God's healing first in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! This Lent, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can view all the confession times across the region by using the NEW Confession Finder map online at theLightIsON.org and look for additional Lenten resources in the back of church. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

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3rd Sunday of Lent

How are your Lenten commitments going? Looking for a way to kick start your Lent? This week we continue *The Light is ON*. Renew your relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! This Lent, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can find confession resources and view all the confession times across the region by using the NEW Confession Finder map online at theLightisON.org. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

4th Sunday of Lent

Did you know that every Catholic is asked to go to Confession at least once a year? If it's been a while, you're not alone! Lent is the perfect time to go to Confession and the priest is here to help. God doesn't need us to be perfect in order to love us; but he does need us to trust him. To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! This Lent, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can find confession resources and view all the confession times across the region by using the NEW Confession Finder map online at theLightisON.org. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

5th Sunday of Lent

Have you been struggling with worry or fear keeping you from God's love and mercy? Now is the time to go to face the truth: all that is waiting for you in confession is love and forgiveness. Come to Confession before Holy Week and Easter and celebrate in freedom. To help you do this, we are happy to announce the *The Light is ON* for you! This Lent, every Catholic parish across the Archdiocese of Washington and Diocese of Arlington, including our own, will offer additional times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This year you can find confession resources and view all the confession times across the region by using the NEW Confession Finder map online at theLightisON.org. You can also find additional confession resources in the back of church today.

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Prayers of the Faithful

For additional Prayers of the Faithful for the Season of Lent please see the Roman Missal, Appendix V (“Examples of Formularies for the Universal Prayer”), Sections 5. (Lent I) and 6. (Lent II).

Ash Wednesday

That as we begin this Lenten season Catholics across the DC metro area will seek to renew their relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation offered through The Light is ON initiative, let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

1st Sunday of Lent

That we may recognize God’s blessings in our lives,
Trust that He desires abundant life for us,
And draw closer to his unconditional love in the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lent,
let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

2nd Sunday of Lent

That through the Sacrament of Reconciliation we may set aside the sin and brokenness that divides us and bring peace to our hearts, our homes, and our world.
let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

3rd Sunday of Lent

That all those carrying the heavy burden of sin will have complete trust in the never-ending mercy of God and His constant desire to forgive each of us through the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lenten season, let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

4th Sunday of Lent

That in this penitential season the experience of God’s forgiveness will lead us all to conversion of heart and to share His forgiveness with those around us,
let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

5th Sunday of Lent

That as we come to the end of the season of Lent we may worthily prepare our hearts to welcome the joy of the resurrection by allowing Jesus to free us from our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation let us pray to the Lord.
R. Lord, hear our prayer

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Oraciones para el Tiempo de Cuaresma

Miércoles de Ceniza

Que al iniciar éste tiempo de Cuaresma, los católicos en todo el área metropolitana de Washington DC busquen renovar su relación con el Dios del amor por medio del Sacramento de la Reconciliación, ofrecido por medio de la campaña La Luz Está Encendida.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

1º Domingo de Cuaresma

Que reconozcamos las bendiciones de Dios en nuestras vidas, confiando en que Él desea una abundante vida en nosotros, y que en ésta Cuaresma nos acerquemos a su amor incondicional en el Sacramento de la Reconciliación.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

2º Domingo de Cuaresma

Que por medio del Sacramento de la Reconciliación podamos dejar a un lado el pecado y los quebrantos que nos dividen y traiga la paz a nuestros corazones, a nuestros hogares y a al mundo.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

3º Domingo de Cuaresma

Que todos los que estén agobiados por el gran peso del pecado tengan la completa confianza de la infinita misericordia de Dios y de su constante deseo de perdonarnos por medio del Sacramento de la Reconciliación en éste tiempo de Cuaresma.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

4º Domingo de Cuaresma

Que en éste tiempo de penitencia, la experiencia del perdón de Dios nos lleve a todos a la conversión de corazón y acción para renovar nuestra relación con Él y compartamos su perdón con las personas que nos rodean.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

5º Domingo de Cuaresma

Que al aproximarnos al final de la temporada de Cuaresma podamos preparar dignamente nuestros corazones para dar la bienvenida al gozo de la Resurrección, permitiendo que Jesús nos libere del pecado por medio del Sacramento de la Reconciliación.
Roguemos al Señor.
R. Te rogamos, Señor.

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The Examen Prayer

The Examen prayer is a beautiful practice of prayer popularized by St. Ignatius of Loyola that helps us see the ways that God is moving in our daily lives. Take a few minutes of undistracted quiet in the mid-day or evening for prayer. By regularly reflecting on our day with God's help, we commit ourselves to grow in virtue and in our relationships with God and one another.

~ Praying the Examen ~

Begin by quieting your mind and heart to be more aware of the presence of God, who is always with you. Ask God to give you the grace to see clearly the events of your day through His eyes, to experience the love He unconditionally offers you, and to listen to the guidance He shares with you.

1. Be Thankful

“Give thanks to God our Lord for the benefits received” (St. Ignatius). God loves you, and shows his love through the blessings He gives us. The good things in our life are signs and reminders that God “came so that [we] might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Our blessings can be big or small: The recovery of a sick loved one; the kind act of a stranger; or the beauty of nature, etc.

- Thinking about your day, what blessings have you received today? What good things have you experienced?
- Bring to mind the many good moments from your day.
- Pause and give thanks to God for these blessings.

2. Acknowledge Need for Help

“Ask Grace to know our sins and cast them out” (St. Ignatius). Recognizing our blessings, we also acknowledge that we struggle and need help. Often we experience brokenness and pain. Brokenness in the world, brokenness in our relationships, and brokenness within ourselves. That brokenness, which is not a part of God’s plan, is a result of those times when we as individuals and we as humanity have chosen to turn away from God’s love. Acknowledging this brokenness and need for help can be scary but is an important step in allowing us to move through it, for God wants to create a “clean heart” for us (Psalm 51:12).

- Ask God to give you the grace and courage to face this brokenness, both in the world and within yourself, so that you can heal and grow.

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3. Review Life Honestly

“Ask account of our soul from the hour that we rose up to the present” (St. Ignatius). In conversation with God pray, Lord, “you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar” (Psalm 139:1-3) and ask God to help you review the events of your day. As you mentally walk through the day, different moments may surface. Honestly examine each of these moments throughout your day. You may remember moments of joy – be grateful for them again. You may find moments where you recognize God’s presence only in hindsight – desire to see more clearly. You may realize something good hidden in a difficult situation – trust in God’s goodness even during times of struggle. And you may find moments where you turned away from God’s love, where you experienced and chose to continue that brokenness – take responsibility for those times and for your role in that.

- Review your morning, afternoon, and evening.
- As you remember each moment, ask God: Where were you in that moment, Lord? What were you asking of me? How did I respond to you?
- Pause to listen to God’s response to these questions.

4. Trust in God’s Forgiveness

“Ask pardon of God our Lord for the faults” (St. Ignatius). As the review of your day reveals times you may have turned away from God’s love, let your heart be filled with sorrow and even more of the desire to restore your relationship with God. Like the father of the lost son, God’s never-ending love reaches out to welcome us when we turn back toward him. No matter how you might have turned away, God wants to forgive you. Never let sorrow control you or lead you to doubt the strength of God’s love for you, for “neither death, nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

- Ask God to forgive you.
- Trust that He does forgive you, and accept his mercy.

5. Commit to Live Differently

“To purpose amendment with His grace” (St. Ignatius). Renewed, turn your thoughts to the coming day with the clarity of this prayer experience so that “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

- What lessons from this prayer can you carry into tomorrow?
- What concrete actions can you take to grow closer to God and others?
- Commit to live these actions, asking for God’s help to do so.

Close your Examen with an Our Father, the prayer that Jesus taught us to say with confidence.

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Why Go To Confession?

God loves each of us. We have been created by God and placed in this world to know, love, and serve Him. Unfortunately, we do not always show our love for God in our words and actions. There are times when we turn away from God. These moments when we chose to do wrong or avoid what is good are sins. The good news is that God has given us a way to turn back to Him with our whole heart. He has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

One of the seven outward signs of grace instituted by Christ and given to the Church; this Sacrament of Healing provides an opportunity for a person to receive God's forgiveness, pardon for their sins, and reconciliation with God and His Church.

Sometimes people say the Sacrament of Reconciliation, other times the Sacrament of Penance, and still other times they say they are going to Confession. Which name is correct?

All of these names are correct. Confession, penance, and reconciliation are all aspects of the sacrament. Confession is when we tell our sins to the priest. Penance is the action that the priest gives us to do or say to express our gratitude for God's forgiveness. Finally, we experience reconciliation when the priest absolves us of our sins, which repairs our relationship with God and the Church. Because reconciliation is the fruit of the sacrament, this is the name the Church prefers for the sacrament.

Why should I go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and confess my sins to a priest? Can't I ask God for forgiveness on my own?

Asking for forgiveness is an important first step in repairing our relationship with God and others. However, sin damages not only your relationship with God but also your relationship with others and the Church. The priest hearing your confession acts as Christ present to you, offering God's mercy and forgiveness. In this way, the priest carries on the healing ministry that Jesus entrusted to his apostles when he shared with them his power to forgive sins (John 20:23).

Will the priest tell anyone about the sins I have confessed?

No, the priest cannot and will not tell anyone about anything you said during your confession. In fact, the Church requires that the priest keep secret anything you confess to him.

What if I am embarrassed to tell the priest my sins?

Feeling guilt or embarrassment about your sins is normal. It is also a sign that your conscience is letting you know that you have done something wrong. The priest is there to listen to you with the heart of Jesus. Jesus came to love and forgive and never seeks to embarrass us.

Will the priest be embarrassed by what I tell him?

Priests have heard many sins confessed to them and are prepared to offer spiritual counsel and absolution. Remember that priests are human and strive to avoid sin like everyone else - they regularly go to confession themselves. The priest will listen to you with understanding, not embarrassment or judgment.

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How can I prepare to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Examine your conscience. Think about both the times that you have intentionally done something wrong and the times that you chose not to do something for the good of another person. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) are helpful tools for examining your conscience.

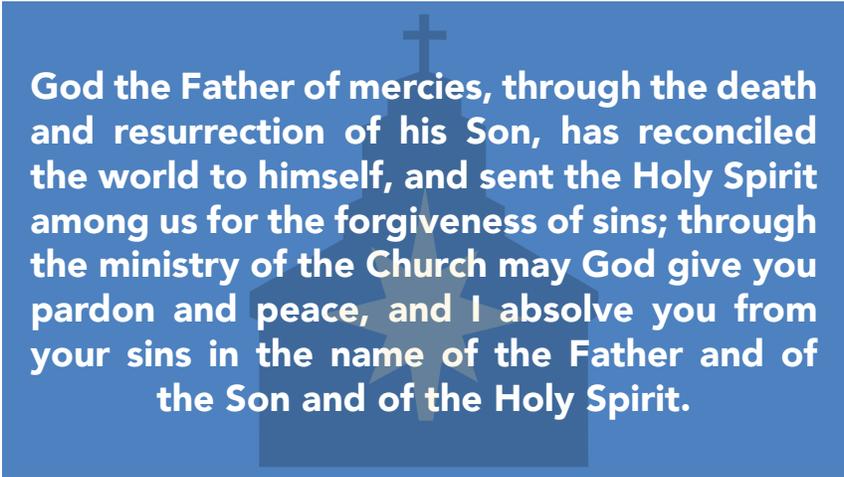
What if I don't remember how to go to confession?

Going to Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is most comfortable for you. Here are the steps:

1. The priest gives a blessing or greeting.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, "Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..." (give weeks, months, or years).
3. Confess all your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.)
4. Say, "I am sorry for these and all my sins."
5. The priest gives a penance and offers advice to help you become a better Catholic Christian.
6. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins.
7. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

"Go in peace"

As you consider this beautiful gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reflect on these words of absolution offered by the priest and realize the great love and mercy that awaits you.



God the Father of mercies, through the death and 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.

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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.

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La Conversión y el Perdón: Regresar a Jesús después de haberle negado

Dijo Pedro, “Hombre, no sé de qué hablas.” En ese mismo momento, mientras Pedro aún estaba hablando, cantó un gallo. Entonces el Señor se volvió y miró a Pedro, y Pedro se acordó de que el Señor le había dicho: “Hoy, antes que el gallo cante, me negarás tres veces.” Y salió Pedro de allí y lloró amargamente. (Lucas 22:60-61)

Mientras arrestaban a Jesús, Pedro, un discípulo fiel y amado por Dios, es acusado por la comunidad como seguidor del señor. Lleno de temor, Pedro niega conocer a Jesús, jurando: “¡No conozco a ese hombre de quien ustedes están hablando!” En ese instante, sin haber Pedro terminando su negación, voltea Jesús su mirada hacia él.

“Nos conmueve la actitud de Jesús: no escuchamos palabras de desprecio, no escuchamos palabras de condena, sino sólo palabras de amor, de misericordia, que invitan a la conversión.”

Papa Francisco

Como Pedro, debemos considerar cuántas veces hemos negado a Jesús. ¿En qué momento hemos nosotros tenido la oportunidad de hacer el bien y por conveniencia, o simple pereza, hemos decidido por el mal? ¿Cuántas veces hemos optado por el camino más fácil, el más placentero?

En medio de esta oscuridad en la cual negamos, como Pedro, a Jesús, el señor nos ofrece una increíble sorpresa: Jesús voltea su mirada de amor hacia nosotros.

“Es el movimiento del ‘corazón contrito’ (Sal 51, 19), atraído y movido por la gracia a responder al amor misericordioso de Dios que nos ha amado primero.”

Catecismo 1428

Al poner Jesús su mirada en Pedro, el pecador se conmueve y experimenta un cambio de corazón – Pedro, en lagrimas, se arrepiente.

El movimiento del corazón arrepentido volteando hacia Jesús, la conversión del corazón, lleva al pecador a responder a la invitación misericordiosa de Jesús al perdón. Este perdón lo recibimos de manera concreta en el sacramento de la reconciliación.

Lo importante no es caer, es saber levantarse. En este caminar de la vida, todos experimentamos momentos de caída en la cual le fallamos a Dios, a nuestros hermanos, y hasta a nosotros mismos. En estos momentos debemos reconocer que lo más importante no es el pecado que hemos cometido, cuan grave que sea, sino el retornar a Jesús con un corazón arrepentido, y pedir perdón.

“¡Apártate de mí, Señor, porque soy un pecador!”

Lucas 5:8

Muchas veces no nos confesamos porque nos convencemos que somos indignos de recibir a Dios. Nos decimos continuamente, “¡No me merezco el perdón de Dios!” Lastimosamente, nos enfocamos tanto en el pecado, su gravedad y frecuencia, que limitamos el poder de la misericordia de Dios.

Lo que nos llevara a la sanación no es el enfocarnos en lo que nos tiene enfermo, sino buscar la medicina que nos restaurara la salud. Jesús nos espera, con alegría y amor, a que regresemos a Él para la medicina de misericordia que nos reconciliara con Dios.

Atrevámonos a ser liberados de nuestros pecados, a experimentar la conversión, y a recibir el perdón de nuestro Dios. Como miro Jesús a Pedro, así mismo nos mira Jesús a nosotros, con misericordia y amor. No tengamos miedo! Volvamos al Él, recibamos su perdón en el sacramento de la reconciliación.

Yo no he venido a llamar a los justos, sino a los pecadores, para que se vuelvan a Dios.

Lucas 5:32

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The Light is On for *Everyone* ***Next Steps for Pastors & Parish Leaders***

Religious education programs

- On religious education and registration forms, ask parents or caregivers if any accommodations are needed for their child.
- Consider incorporating adaptive tools and materials into your existing programs. Visual aids used in these programs benefit all children.
- Children with different styles of learning are more comfortable with the reception of the Sacrament if they have met with the Confessor several times beforehand.

Bulletin announcements

- When announcing times for Lenten reconciliation services and confession times, add information to contact parish office if they or their child will need accommodations for the reception of the Sacrament.
- Contact the Department of Special Needs Ministries if an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter will be needed for the parish communal reconciliation service.

Confession space

- If the Church has traditional confessionals, why not designate a room for persons who may use a wheelchair, walker, or cane? Traditional confessionals are challenging for people who use mobility aids.
- Provide copies of adapted prayers, including the *Act of Contrition*, both in the confessional and pews. Copies are available through the Department of Special Needs Ministries.
- Make available several copies of any additional materials in large print.

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Outreach

- Consider offering Confession during hospital and nursing home visits.
- Encourage families with children living with severe disabilities to join the rest of the parish during Lenten services. He or she can participate with the parish community.
- Children or adults who communicate mainly with gestures are welcomed to use a communication device during Confession. Prior to the celebration of the Sacrament, confessors may need advice, from the family or caregiver and instruction on how the device works.
- Share your own experiences as a priest or parish staff working with a person with special needs on the parish website, social media (The Light is On #GetCloser), and bulletins.

Material and tools are available at the Department of Special Needs Ministries. Contact us with any questions. For additional information, please refer to the USCCB *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities* (updated November 2017)

<http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/upload/Guidelines-for-the-Celebration-of-the-Sacraments-with-Persons-with-Disabilities-Revised-Edition.pdf>

301-853-4560 or specialneedsministry@adw.org



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