

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 18: The Sacrament of Reconciliation God's Forgiveness Available to All



CCC 1422-24

1. *Our new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin. Jesus willed that his Church continue his work of healing and salvation through the sacrament of reconciliation.*
2. Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him. They are reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins.
3. This sacrament is called the sacrament of conversion; of penance; of confession; of forgiveness; of reconciliation.
4. *Why a Sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?* Conversion to Christ and the new birth of Baptism have made us holy and without blemish, but have not abolished our human weakness or the inclination to sin. We are in constant need of conversion and forgiveness.
5. Our sin can still cause a break in our relationship with God, separating us from Him and from his life. We do not have an absolute assurance of salvation once we have accepted Jesus and have been baptized; we can choose to throw away God's gift of salvation through mortal sin.
6. Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion, but Christ continues to call Christians to a *second conversion* – an ongoing task for the whole Church.

CCC 1425-26
1 Cor 6:11
1 Jn 1:8

Ps 14:2-3, 51:5
Rom 3:23, 11:22
Mt 7:21, 24:13
1 Cor 9:27
Phil 2:12

CCC 1427
Mk 1:15

Ex 29:43
Lev 17:11

Mk 2:1-12
Lk 7:47

Jn 1:29
Isa 53:5-6
Heb 9:12-14

CCC 1430-32

7. The Tabernacle/Temple was the place where God met His people, where they perpetually offered blood sacrifices on the altar in atonement for their sins through the mediation of priests. When the Romans destroyed the Temple, Israel was left without sacrifices.
8. Jesus forgave many people, which angered the Pharisees: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
9. Through his Paschal sacrifice Jesus offered his life to atone for our sins and reconcile us to God. By dying, he conquered sin and death. Now he is eternal high priest and mediator between God and man.

Penance in Christian Life

10. God must give man a new heart. Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him.
11. Jesus' call to conversion and penance does not aim first at outward works but at the conversion of the heart. This conversion:
 - a. Urges expression in visible gestures and works of penance.
 - b. Is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil.
 - c. Entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in his grace.
 - d. Is accompanied with a salutary pain and sadness.

CCC 1434-35	12. Interior penance can be expressed in many ways: Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, reconciliation with neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of others, intercession of saints, practice of charity, defense of justice, admission of faults, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering and persecution; taking up one's cross and following Jesus.
CCC 1436-37	13. The Eucharist, reading Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, the Our Father, sincere acts of worship or devotion are remedies to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins.
CCC 1438	14. The liturgical seasons and days of penance (Lent, Fridays) are appropriate times for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, self-denial (fasting and almsgiving), and charitable and missionary work.
CCC 1439, Lk 15:11-24	15. The process of conversion and repentance, and the infinite mercy of the Father are described in the parable of the prodigal son.
CCC 1440	The Sacrament of Reconciliation 16. Sin is a rupture of communion with God and with the Church. Conversion includes both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of reconciliation.
CCC 1441 Mk 2:5, 10	17. Only God forgives sins. As Son of God, Jesus has authority on earth to forgive sins, and he gives this power to men to exercise in his name. Christ has willed that his Church should be the sign and instrument of his forgiveness and reconciliation.
CCC 1442 2 Cor 5:20 Jn 20:21-23	18. Jesus entrusted the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation." The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ," pleading: "Be reconciled to God."
CCC 1443	19. Jesus not only forgave sins; he also received sinners at his table, a sign that he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God.
CCC 1444-45 Mt 16:19, 18:18	20. Jesus gave to Peter and the apostles the keys to the kingdom of heaven and the office of binding and loosing - the power to forgive sins and the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.
CCC 1446-48	21. Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church to offer a new possibility to recover the grace of justification. Two essential elements to the sacrament: a) The acts of man who undergoes conversion: <i>contrition, confession, satisfaction</i> ; b) God's action through the intervention of the Church.
CCC 1451	22. Contrition is "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Perfect contrition": arises from an intense love of God. Remits venial sins and obtains forgiveness of mortal sins with the firm resolution to receive sacramental confession as soon as possible. b. "Imperfect contrition": born of the consideration of sin's ugliness or the fear punishment. Cannot obtain forgiveness of grave sins, but disposes one to obtain it in the sacrament of penance.
CCC 1452	
CCC 1453	
CCC 1454-56	23. Confession to a priest is an essential part of penance. In confessing, man looks at his sins, takes responsibility for them, and opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church. It should be

	prepared by an examination of conscience.
CCC 1456-58	24. All mortal sins must be confessed, even the most secret. Withholding mortal sins in confession adds the mortal sin of sacrilege. Confession once a year is obligatory; once a month is recommended. One cannot receive communion in state of mortal sin. Confession of venial sins is strongly recommended: this helps form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, lets ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit.
CCC 1459	25. Satisfaction: Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm, e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries.
CCC 1460	26. Absolution takes away sin, but does not remedy the disorders sin has caused. The sinner must recover his spiritual health by making satisfaction for his sins. The confessor imposes a penance for the spiritual good of the penitent, e.g. prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices.
CCC 1461-66 CCC 1495	27. The minister of the sacrament: Only priests can forgive sins in the name of Christ as the sign and instrument of God's merciful love.
CCC 1467	28. The " sacramental seal ": every priest who hears confessions is bound to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins confessed to him.
CCC 1468-70	29. The effects of the sacrament: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace; Reconciliation with the Church; Remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins; Remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments; Peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation; Increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle; Anticipation of the judgment at the end of the sinner's earthly life.
CCC 1480-84	30. The celebration of the sacrament: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Greeting and blessing from the priest; [Reading the word of God]; [Exhortation to repentance]; The confession of sins to the priest; Imposition and acceptance of a penance; The priest's absolution; Act of contrition or prayer of thanksgiving and praise; Dismissal with the blessing of the priest.

"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." (CCC 1449)

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do we need our sins to be forgiven after Baptism? How does the sacrament of Reconciliation inspire hope for eternal life and transformation in Christ?
2. Are there any aspects of going to Confession that worry you?
3. Why do we need to confess our sins to a priest instead of just going "straight to God"? (Tip: How did Israelites obtain forgiveness for their sins in the Old Testament?)
4. What is the point of confessing venial sins, since these are forgiven anyway when we receive the Eucharist?
5. What are the effects of the sacrament of reconciliation that we can hope for?
6. How can prayer, fasting and almsgiving help us ward off sin and promote holiness?