

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Commonly Called

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

The power and authority of absolution reside in the Apostolic priesthood by virtue of our Lord's express declaration: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." The Sacrament of Penance is the method by which this authority is exercised to remit sins committed after Baptism. Sin destroys the union between the soul and God which was effected in Baptism. Thus, just as there is a sacrament (Baptism) to effect the union in the first place, so there is a sacrament (Penance) to restore this union when sin has broken it. The outward and visible sign of the sacrament is the declaration of a Priest of the Apostolic succession: "I absolve thee from all thy sins." Its inward and spiritual grace is the application of the merits of the Cross to the life of the individual for the forgiveness of sin.

The part of the person approaching this sacrament is repentance. True repentance has three elements:

1. CONTRITION or sorrow for sin. This can be obtained only at the foot of the Cross. We may not have an *emotion* of sorrow, but when we see what our sins have done to Jesus, we shall *be* sorry.

2. CONFESSION of all known sin. This involves a careful examination of our conscience. We cannot confess our sins until we see exactly how we look to the all-seeing eye of God.

3. SATISFACTION and AMENDMENT OF LIFE. We must intend to lead a new or better life. This intention is shown by our acceptance

and performance of the penance imposed by the Priest in confession.

SELF-EXAMINATION

Before self-examination, say this prayer:

O HOLY Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, and of knowledge, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me, and help me now to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before thy judgment-seat. Bring to my mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by self-love. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, knowing how deeply they have wounded the loving Heart of my Heavenly Father; and help me to make a good confession that all stain of guilt may be washed away in the Precious Blood of my Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Think of yourself as God's child, and of the wickedness of following Satan rather than your loving Father.

Do not be in a hurry, and do not vex yourself because you cannot remember everything. Be honest with God and with yourself; this is all God asks of you.

Write down briefly what you remember of your sins. Don't try to depend on your memory. If

there is any question you do not understand, let it alone, and go on to the next one.

Do not fret about your sins. Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise."

I. PRIDE

Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

Have you been more interested in self than in God?

Have you made it your chief aim to be always on top?

What have you been vain about; personal appearance, clothes, personality, possessions, your family, ability, success in games or in studies?

Have you scorned other people for their misfortunes, their sins, stupidity, or other weaknesses? Scorned other people's religion?

Talked too much; called attention to yourself?

Been sorry for yourself, self-pitying?

Refused to admit when you were in the wrong? Refused to apologize?

Been resentful or suspicious of others through over-sensitiveness?

Have you been stubborn and self-willed? In what ways?

II. IDOLATRY

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.

Have you put another person before God's law; by not going to church, or by committing some other sin to please that person?

Have you wanted popularity so much that you have not said your prayers, or done some other good things, for fear of being laughed at?

Have you loved money or clothes too much; or even sinned to get them?

Gone to mediums, fortune-tellers or astrologers?

III. PROFANITY

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Have you sworn? (Especially, have you misused the Holy Name of Jesus?)

Have you given way to anxiety, instead of turning to God for help?

Been worried, afraid, allowed yourself to get into a panic?

Allowed yourself to feel that it was impossible even for God to help you?

IV. IRREVERENCE

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.

Have you missed Mass on Sunday, when you could have gone?

Have you failed to say your prayers morning and night? or to say them earnestly?

Have you always kept Sunday as you think it ought to be kept?

Have you done some unnecessary work on Sunday?

Have you always tried hard to worship God when in church? or have you sometimes been irreverent? or joked about holy things?

Have you ever been ashamed of your Religion: ashamed of Jesus?

V. DISOBEDIENCE

Honour thy father and thy mother.

Have you been grateful enough for all your parents have done for you?

Did you ever disobey them, or others who were over you; or did you ever obey them slowly and reluctantly?

Have your actions ever caused them anxiety or shame?

Have you ever deliberately disobeyed God or ignored His desires for you? In what way?

Have you ever shown disregard for the laws of the Church?

For the laws of the land?

Have you contributed as much as you ought to the support or the happiness of your parents?

What sins have you committed with regard to your wife (husband), children, or other members of your family?

Have you given as much care and attention as possible to the religious life of your family; for example, with regard to Grace at Meals, Family Prayers, Church-going, etc.?

Have you seen that your children had adequate and continuous religious instruction?

Have you been just and generous to people in your employment, or under your authority in business? In what ways have you failed?

Have you tried to dominate the lives of others unduly? How?

VI. HATE

Thou shalt do no murder.

Have you killed anyone, either in outward deed, or in your heart?

Have you wished that someone was dead?

Have you been angry unjustly? Struck people? or hurt them by ridicule or contempt?

Have you ever cursed people?

Have you gossiped about people?

Is there anyone whom you now hold a grudge against? or are unwilling to forgive? (Think how often God has forgiven you; and ask Him to help you to forgive and love your enemies for His sake.)

Have you refused to help people who were in real need of help? ignored the sick or the poor? not tried to be friendly with people, especially with people who are not very popular?

Have you been afraid to stand up for a person when others were mistreating him?

Have you ever taught (or tempted) another person to sin?

VII. IMPURITY

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Have you been impure in thought, word or deed? (You need not talk much about it, but make it quite plain to the Priest just

what kind of sins you mean; whether they were done alone; or with a man or woman; and, if possible, how often.)

Have you looked at evil pictures? or read bad passages in books? Have you ever used the Bible in this way?

Have you been immodest in actions, or in dress?

Have you been lazy in prayers, work, or study? neglected business, family, or social duties?

Have you ever eaten, drunk, or smoked more than was good for you?

Have you neglected the days of fasting or abstinence?

Broken rules or resolutions which you have made for yourself?

Allowed yourself to be over-engrossed in light reading, the movies, or other pastimes, to the exclusion of worthwhile things?

Have you been cowardly in sickness or pain?

Been unmindful of the suffering of the world?

VIII. THEFT

Thou shalt not steal.

Have you ever stolen anything? What things? Have you shared in stolen goods?

Have you cheated in business, games, or lessons?

Have you been over-extravagant; gambled or bet too much?

Tried hard to pay all your debts? Contracted debts unnecessarily?

Have you remembered that God has given you all you have? Have you thanked Him enough? Have you given as much as you ought to the Church or to charities?

Have you been stingy?

Have you wasted time?

IX. DECEIT

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

How many lies have you told?

Have you exaggerated too much? Been deceitful, unfair, a hypocrite?

Allowed others to receive blame for your faults?

Been harsh toward others, or in speaking of others, for sins which you also have committed?

X. DISCONTENT

Thou shalt not covet.

Have you been jealous of others, because they had more things, or more money; or because they were better looking or more

successful; or because someone loves them more than you?

Been grieved at the prosperity or attainments of others?

Been dejected because of the position, talents, or fortune of others?

Have you been glad when they failed, or were in trouble? Glad when you heard people speak ill of them?

Have you allowed yourself to be sad and discouraged at times; and not always fought to be brave and joyful?

Have you tried to accept loss or sorrow or hard things at the Hand of God?

Have you thought that God does not love you?

Have you ever given up trying to be good?

Prayer After Self-Examination

O MY God, how great are my sins! Would that I had never offended thee. If by carelessness or ignorance I have forgotten anything in my self-examination, show it to me now that I may make a good confession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONTRITION

O MY God, I cry unto thee with the prodigal: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But now, O God, give me true sorrow of heart for my many sins whereby I have grieved thee, and enable me to make a full confession to thy priest, that I may receive perfect remission of them, through thine infinite goodness. Amen.

O GOD, I am very sorry that I have sinned against thee who art so good. Forgive me for Jesus' sake, and I will try to sin no more. Amen.

O GOD, I love thee with my whole heart and above all things and am heartily sorry that I have offended thee. May I never offend thee any more. Oh, may I love thee without ceasing, and make it my delight to do in all things thy most holy will. Amen.

CONFESSION

When your turn comes, kneel in the confessional or other place where the Priest is sitting, and say immediately:

BLESS me, Father, for I have sinned.

*When the Priest has given you his blessing,
say, without further delay:*

I CONFESS to God Almighty, to Blessed Mary and all the Saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault. Especially, I accuse myself of the following sins since my last confession which was ago.

Then, without exaggerating or extenuating the offenses of which you may be conscious, tell them, as if to God himself, with a humble, sorrowful and contrite heart. When you have finished telling your sins, say:

For these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember, I am heartily sorry, I firmly purpose amendment, and ask pardon of God, and of you, Father, penance, counsel and absolution. Wherefore, I beg Blessed Mary, all the Saints, and you, Father, to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.

Listen attentively to anything the Priest may choose to say; humbly accept the penance he imposes and, when he raises his hand in absolution, make the sign of the cross.

SATISFACTION

Return to your place and make your thanksgiving for your absolution.

I THANK thee, my God, for giving me the forgiveness of my sins, through the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ my Saviour. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.

O MOST merciful God, who in forgiving our sins, rememberest them no more against us forever, accept my unworthy thanks for thy great goodness in blotting out my transgressions. Let the grace of this absolution strengthen and sustain me, and may the pitifulness of thy great mercy defend me evermore from all assaults of the enemy. Amen.

Then perform the penance the Priest assigned to you as follows:

O LORD God, I desire to offer thee the penance which thou hast given me by

the word of thy minister. It is as nothing compared to the sins which I have committed: nevertheless, I unite it to the sufferings of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and offer it as an act of adoration of thy divine majesty, of sorrow for my sins (especially), and of supplication for the virtues of *Then say your penance.*

O MY God, I resolve to show my thanks to thee for receiving me as thy forgiven child, by fighting against sin in the future. I resolve by thy grace to avoid what is wrong, to believe what is true, to do what is right, and to continue thy faithful soldier and servant unto my life's end.

MAY the holy Mother of God, my Guardian Angel, and my holy Patron, join with me in giving thanks unto the Lord for his great goodness, and loving-kindness, in pardoning mine iniquity. And may the eternal Father, of his boundless mercy and by the life and death of his dear Son, enable me to persevere unto the end, and ✠ die in his favour. Amen.

LITANY OF PENITENCE

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

God the Father, of heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, One God,
Jesu, who didst come to seek and to save
that which was lost,
Who didst send John before thee to preach
repentance,
Who didst forgive the many sins of Mary
Magdalene,
Who didst promise Paradise to the Peni-
tent Thief,
Who didst no sin, and yet barest our sins
on the tree,
Who wast bruised for our iniquities,
Who givest time and place for repentance,
Who of thy goodness ledest us to repen-
tance,
Who after repentance rememberest our
sins no more,

Have mercy upon us.

From all evil,
From all sin,
From a sudden and unprepared death,
By thy baptism and holy fast,
By thy labours and sorrows,
By thy Blood shed for the remission of our
sins,
In the day of tribulation and anguish,
In the hour of death and in the day of
judgment,

Good Lord, deliver us.

We sinners do beseech thee to hear us,
that it may please thee to bring us to
true repentance,
That condemning ourselves, we may escape
thy condemnation,
That we may bring forth fruit worthy of
repentance,
That all bitterness and anger be put away
from us,
That we be not desirous of vain-glory,
That we may resist the wiles of the devil,
That we may work out our salvation with
fear and trembling,
That being dead to sin, we may live unto
righteousness,
That it may please thee to purge us here,
and to spare us in eternity,

We beseech thee to hear us.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world,

Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world,

Hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the
world,

Have mercy upon us.

Let us pray.

O God, who desirest not the death of a sinner;
mercifully look on the weakness of our mortal
nature and of thy great mercy accept our re-
pentance, that through thy pity we may obtain
remission of our sins, steadfastness in thy ser-
vice, and finally the reward which thou hast
promised to those that persevere. Through
Christ our Lord. Amen.

BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

This popular devotion began in the thirteenth century. It is an extension of that very brief section of the Mass when, just before the Communion, special devotion is addressed to Jesus present on the altar under the outward signs of bread and wine. The Mass, however, is addressed primarily to God the Father and it would overturn the nature of the Eucharistic action to give the Mass over to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The love of devout hearts felt the need of expressing their faith in our Lord's sacramental presence and their adoration of him who comes to be with us in this lowly form. And out of this need grew the custom of taking the Sacred Host from the tabernacle at some time when Mass was not being offered, and holding a little service of adoration. A very old Christian tradition dictated that any people who might be in the church when the Blessed Sacrament was being reposed in the tabernacle, be blessed with the Sacrament, and this usual blessing naturally became a part of the service of adoration. Thus Benediction supplies a need of souls who have entered into the meaning of our Lord's real, objective presence in the Blessed Sacrament and, at the same time, guards against the danger of making devotion to the Blessed Sacrament a substitute for the Eucharistic action of offering to the Father.

While the Priest places the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, it is usual to sing the following hymn. Some other hymn may be substituted, provided it be addressed to Jesus.

O SAVING Victim! opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below,
Our foes press on from every side,
Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.

All praise and thanks to thee ascend
For evermore, blest One in Three;
O grant us life that shall not end,
In our true native land with thee. Amen.

Then may follow a Litany or other devotions, after which (or, in case no special devotion is said here, immediately after the opening hymn of adoration) the following hymn is always sung. During the second line of the first verse, all bow profoundly.

THEREFORE we, before him bending,
This great Sacrament revere;
Types and shadows have their ending,
For the newer rite is here;
Faith, our outward sense befriending,
Makes our inward vision clear.

Glory let us give and blessing
To the Father and the Son,
Honour, thanks, and praise addressing
While eternal ages run;
Ever too his love confessing
Who from Both with Both is One. Amen.

Then follows the versicle and prayer.

V. Thou didst give them bread from heaven.

R. Containing within itself all sweetness.

(During Eastertide and the Octave of Corpus Christi, Alleluia is added to both versicle and response.)

Let us pray.

O GOD, who under a wonderful sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of thy Passion: grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood; that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of thy redemption. Who livest and reignest, world without end. R. Amen.

Having put on the humeral veil, the Priest ascends to the altar, takes the Blessed Sacrament and, turning, makes the sign of the cross over the people. Look up and adore, saying in your heart: My Lord and my God; repeating the Holy Name over and over; or simply asking, in your own words, Christ's blessing upon yourself and upon those for whom you wish to pray.

Descending the steps, the Priest puts off the veil and says the following, the People repeating each sentence after him.

The Divine Praises

BLESSED be God.

Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

While the Priest reposes the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, the following psalm with its antiphon may be sung. Often some other hymn is substituted.

Antiphon. Let us forever adore the Most Holy Sacrament (*in Eastertide, Alleluia*).

Psalm 117

O PRAISE the Lord, all ye heathen;
★ praise him, all ye nations.

For his merciful kindness is ever more and more towards us; ★ and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise the Lord.

Glory be to the Father.

Antiphon. Let us forever adore the Most Holy Sacrament (*in Eastertide, Alleluia*).

FOR A MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Antiphon. O Sacred Banquet wherein Christ is received, the memory of his Passion is renewed; the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (*Alleluia*)

V. Thou didst give them bread from heaven. (*Alleluia*)

R. Containing within itself all sweetness. (*Alleluia*)

Let us pray.

O GOD, who under a wonderful sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of thy Passion: grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood; that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of thy redemption. Who livest and reignest, world without end. R. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

"I will now turn aside and see this great sight." EXODUS 3:3.

I HEAR thy voice, O Lord Jesus, saying: Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you. I come unto thee weary and laden with my sins and with the cares and distractions of the world. Let me rest awhile in thy sacred presence; let my heart find rest in thy most Sacred Heart. Let me lie safe there and be at rest. Let nothing separate me from thee, here in this world or in the world to come. Amen.

An Act of Adoration

JESUS my Lord and my God, Son of the living God and Son of the Virgin Mary, I believe that thou art here, and I adore thee. Behind the whiteness of the Sacred Host I believe that thou art present, in all the perfection of thy Manhood and Divinity, and I adore thee. With the Angels of thy court, with thy holy Mother Mary, and with all thy Saints, I kneel in humble adoration. Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore, O make me love thee more and more. Amen.

A Prayer for Faith

I COME to thee, dear Lord, like the Apostles, saying, Increase my faith. Give me a firm and lively faith in thy real presence on the altar. Give me the faith of the beloved disciple to recognize thee and say, It is the Lord! Give me the faith of Peter to confess thee and say, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God! Give me the faith of Thomas, who in the end believed and said, My Lord and my God! Give me the faith of all thy Saints to whom this Sacrament has been heaven on earth. In every Communion, at every Mass, and at every visit to thee in this Sacrament, make me to increase in faith and love, and all good things will come to me. O dearest Lord, increase my faith. Amen.

A Prayer for Greater Devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament

I BESEECH thee, O Lord, to have compassion upon me, and to inflame my heart with ardent love and zeal for thine honour and glory; make me through thy grace always so to believe and understand, to feel and firmly hold, to speak and think of the exceeding mystery of this Blessed Sacrament, as shall be well pleasing to thee and profitable to my soul. May thy Priests

continually offer up the Holy Sacrifice in the beauty of holiness, and thy people more and more with devotion and delight throng thine altars. And grant unto thy people that, worthily adoring and receiving thee upon earth, we may all finally by thy mercy be admitted to the heavenly Banquet, where thou, the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, in unveiled majesty art perfectly worshipped and glorified by countless angels and saints for ever and ever. Amen.

Acts of Reparation

O LORD Jesus Christ, who hast willed to abide with us always in this wonderful Sacrament, thus ever glorifying thy Father by the memorial of thy Passion, and giving unto us the food of life; grant me grace to grieve with a hearty sorrow for the insults offered this holy mystery, and to repair so far as lies in my power, with sincere love, the many dishonours thou still continuest to receive in this holy Sacrament. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

O MOST patient Jesus, who for our sakes didst endure the outrages of those who crucified thee, and who still dost expose thyself in this Sacrament to the irreverence of sinful men: I bewail all the

insults which thou hast endured and dost endure and I beseech thee that thou wilt be both for me and for all men, a Propitiation with thine Almighty Father. Kindle within me and in the hearts of all thy people, such burning zeal, fervent devotion and deep reverence, that thou mayest be honoured by men everywhere in this Sacrament of love. Amen.

Prayer of Saint Alphonsus before the Blessed Sacrament

MY Lord Jesus Christ, who for the love which thou bearest to men dost remain day and night in this Sacrament, full of mercy and of love, inviting, expecting, receiving all those who come to visit thee, I believe that thou art present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I adore thee, confessing my own misery and nothingness; and I thank thee for all the mercies which thou hast bestowed upon me, especially for having given me thyself in this Sacrament, for having given me thy most holy Mother Mary for my intercessor, and for having called me to visit thee at this time. I salute thy most loving Heart, and I desire to do so for three ends: 1. In thanksgiving for this great gift; 2. To atone for all the injuries thou hast received from thy enemies in this Sacrament;

3. To adore thee in all places in which thou art least honoured and most neglected in the Holy Sacrament. O my Jesus, I love thee with all my heart; I am sorry for having hitherto displeased thine infinite goodness; I resolve, with the assistance of thy grace, nevermore to offend thee; and at this moment miserable as I am, I desire to consecrate my whole being to thee. I give thee my will, my affections, my desires, and all that I have. From this day forward do with me, and whatever belongs to me, what thou pleasest; I ask and desire only thy love, the gift of final perseverance, and the perfect accomplishment of thy holy will. I recommend to thee the souls in purgatory, and I recommend to thee all poor sinners. Finally, my dear Saviour, I unite all my affections with those of thy most loving Heart; and thus united I offer them to thy eternal Father, and I beseech him, in thy Name, and for thy sake, to accept them. Amen.

Act of Desire

O MOST dear Lord Jesus Christ, graciously fill me with true, calm, holiest charity, that I may ever hunger after thee the Bread of Angels, the refreshment of holy souls. Grant that I may ever long to feed upon thee, and that my inmost soul