

PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION FOR ADULTS:

When the perfect union with God and the Church has been ruptured by an act of sin, a Catholic Christian is to be reconciled with God and the community through the sacrament of reconciliation. The early Church referred to this sacrament as a mini-baptism because it returns a person to full union with the Church.

HISTORY

In the early Church there was a close connection between the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) and the sacrament of reconciliation. The Order of Penitents mirrored the Order of Catechumens. The former consisted of those who had sinned against God and the Church, were expelled from the Church and preparing to return. The latter consisted of those who were preparing to be received into the Church through the sacraments of initiation. The early fathers sometimes referred to reconciliation as a mini-baptism.

The ritual moments of the Order of Penitents was very public. Sinners were expelled from the Church, sprinkled with ashes, made to wear sackcloth and then received back into the Church by the bishop.

By the sixth century, the Order of Penitents had mostly disappeared and was gradually replaced with individual confessions and private penance, popularized throughout Europe by Irish monks. This shift in practice was accompanied by a shift in thinking. A highly communal understanding of conversion, penance and reconciliation was replaced with a much more individualistic view. It was not until the tenth century that absolution became part of the sacrament, as a way to mark the return of the penitent into the fullness of the Church.

In 1215, the Lateran Council imposed the requirement of an Easter confession or annual confession. It was not until the twentieth century that the communal aspect of this sacrament would be rediscovered. The theology of the revised rite of 1972 and the incorporation of communal celebrations of the sacrament testify to this.

THEOLOGY

The sacrament is known as reconciliation, penance or confession; each of these words have a slightly differing meaning. Reconciliation emphasizes the fact that a person is reconciled with God and the Church upon reception of the sacrament. Penance refers to the penitent's conversion, which is necessary in order to celebrate the sacrament fruitfully. Confession is derived from the part of the sacrament where the penitents confess their personal sins.

Indeed, the sacrament of reconciliation relies upon a sense of ongoing conversion, a desire to repent and a need to be reconciled with God and the community. These three movements will free an individual from the alienation and isolation caused by sin.

PREPARING FOR RECONCILIATION

For more information on how to prepare for the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at St. Mark the Evangelist, contact Danny Rodriguez @ dprodriguez@wi.rr.com.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is celebrated in a beautiful reconciliation room located by the east entrance inside the nave (where everyone sits) within our Church. People may confess anonymously or face to face with the priest. The Sacrament is offered on Saturdays from 10:30 to 11:30 am and immediately after the 4:00 pm Mass, as well as anytime by making an appointment with a priest.