

## Sacrament of Reconciliation — Part II

So much of what do in the world is based on a model of business: you make a good investment, maybe even act shrewdly, and the benefits are profitable. Sacraments are not a business endeavor. Certainly, the Sacrament of Reconciliation can not be based on a business venture. And yet, that is how many people view the Sacrament. I sin, I pay my debt, and God pays me off with forgiveness.

What must be remembered is that we are not in a contractual relationship with God; the relationship we have with God is a *covenant*, not a *contract*. In other words, the business model of forgiveness is not what the celebration of reconciliation is about. God is in a relationship of covenant with us, a relationship of love and concern for us. God wants nothing more than our turning — again and again — back to him so that we can live in complete freedom as children of God.

As I mentioned in the homily last weekend, we are asked to celebrate the Sacrament at least once a year whenever we are aware of *serious* sin — those actions made with full knowledge and freedom to do what we know is wrong, and so Lent is a good time to celebrate the Sacrament. (see Catechism, #1547) (This was the foundation of the “Easter Duty:” going to Communion at least during the Easter Season, with Confession being a preparation for reception. Keep in mind, this mandate had a purpose when Catholics did not go to Communion on a frequent basis. Hence, “Easter Duty.” Today, however, we are encouraged to receive Holy Communion each week.) Still, Lent is an excellent time to celebrate the Sacrament.

Or think of the times that we were trained to go to Confession, even weekly, and if we had no serious sin we went “just to get the grace.” Yes, every Sacrament conveys the grace of God, not as a business transaction that can be measured, but the very relationship of God Himself with us. Because we do not celebrate Sacraments merely to get something, there is a great responsibility on the individual to examine one’s conscience (both the good and the bad — more on this next week) to determine when the Sacrament of Reconciliation is truly necessary.

It’s also important to remember that the Eucharist is the primary Sacrament of reconciliation. Our faith teaches us that the minor infractions against others and God are forgiven with the reception of Communion. This does not replace the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but rather calls us to be more aware of the relationship we have with God on all levels.

My hunch is that people would be much more comfortable celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation if we could rid ourselves of the business model of receiving God’s mercy. It’s not a business, it’s a relationship. A covenant of love.