

# THE RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

(An adaptation of “El Paso Penitencial”

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## FIRST MOMENT: THE CONFESSION OF PRAISE

In this first moment of dialogue, “confession” is used in the sense of “profession.” We are called to recognize and profess before God, and before the Church, the gifts that God has given to us. We, then, praise and thank Him for these gifts.

When we begin by praising and thanking God, we are opening ourselves to a whole new approach. The Act of Reconciliation is not experienced as a formal and anxious act of admission of faults, but rather basically as a time to praise and thank God. The penitent is invited to profess God’s love for him or her and to appreciate the gifts this loving God has given him or her. Usually penitents are surprised that it is so easy to find something for which to give thanks to God.

In this way, sin is seen not simply in relationship to an abstract law. Rather it is seen as part of our constant interaction with God and it is seen in relationship to the love that He has for us which leads Him to want to do good for us always. In this context, sin is seen more clearly as a response or rather, a lack of response, to God’s love and as an act of ingratitude, a failure to live a life of thanksgiving for all that we have received from Him.

## SECOND MOMENT: THE CONFESSION OF LIFE

The “Confession of Life” is the moment when we accuse ourselves of our sins in the light of the laws of God and the laws of the Church. We ask ourselves: “Since my last confession: what is it that most weighs me down? What do I wish were not part of my life? What is it that I feel upset and sad about?”

These and similar questions help us realize our own difficulty in loving God and our neighbor. And they help us recognize our own negative tendencies that go against our human dignity and make our following of God more difficult.

And we could say even more: in this light there is a great value in confessing those things that we wish did not happen because even though we may not be guilty of sin in some circumstances, this confession could lead us to discover the root of many of our daily sins. We are speaking here of that deep bitterness within us that leads us to distance ourselves from others and also those unjust hurts that we have received from others and finally that bad humor that we show to others and to God himself.

There are many people, even religious, who find themselves resentful of God because he has not lived up to their hopes, because they did not receive the help that they expected when and how they expected it. They feel that God has let them down. It is good that they

express this sentiment. Maybe it is not a formal sin but it could be the cause of distractions in prayer, the cause of neglect of our spiritual life, the cause of impatience with others and the motive of our anger, revenge, ambition, envy. All of these have their root in the heart according to the gospel, Mc 7, 20-23. It is helpful to confess the faults of patience and charity if we do not seek to find the deep roots of these faults that are frequently these sentiments that profoundly disquiet us.

Maybe we do not want to admit it but sometimes we are tempted against faith and charity. Maybe our faith is weak and lukewarm. Maybe we are incredulous about some beliefs. The “Confession of Life” invites us, before God and our own incredulous, skeptical and rational self, to confess our secret attachments with our sins, with our guilt, with our envy, with our sensuality. These secret attachments, which we, perhaps, repress and hide with the veil of inhibition, are really the source of our downfall and deterioration. And later, because these are not confessed and completely healed, they continue to be the hidden causes of much of our negative attitudes, our luke-warmness, our dejection and our spiritual negligence in general.

The “Confession of Life,” if it is done regularly in the context of Church and community and with a person who understands us and who acts in the name of the Church, has great value as an act of spiritual healing, or better, it is the prelude to the real spiritual healing which takes place in the “Confession of Faith.”

### **THIRD MOMENT: THE CONFESSION OF FAITH**

The “Confession of Faith” consists in recognizing that we ourselves, by own efforts, cannot better ourselves. It is God who saves us.

If we come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation it is because we realize that we alone, by our own efforts, cannot bring about the reconciliation that we hope to achieve. The “Confession of Faith” is the proclamation:

“Lord, I believe that only you can save me.” It is the petition of pardon: “Lord, forgive me my sin.” It is not simply a juridical and formal petition but rather a petition of the Spirit who is the “remission of sins.” It is the realization not only of the reality of sin in general, but also of the weight and results of sin in my own life.

We invoke the Holy Spirit as He who is the “Remission of Sins” with dispositions of faith. This helps us enter into the very life of the sacrament and converts it into the saving act of Jesus in his Paschal Mystery.

It is through the Resurrection of Jesus that the Sacrament of Reconciliation comes to us and through the same Resurrection with the unifying and formative force of charity that brings us the Eucharist.