

Preparation for the Sacrament of Penance

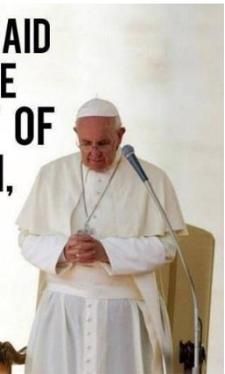
Parent Session 5

Visible Sign of a Merciful Father

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You show us the glory of the Father,
the God of mercy and forgiveness, the God who is love.
Help us to trust fully in your divine mercy
and rely completely on your unending love.
Teach us to be merciful, as the Father is merciful,
that the whole world may know
and trust in your merciful love.
We ask this through the intercession of Mary,
Mother of Mercy,
Amen.

**DON'T BE AFRAID
TO GO TO THE
SACRAMENT OF
CONFESSION,
WHERE YOU
WILL MEET
JESUS WHO
FORGIVES YOU.**
Pope Francis



Warm Up—Ambassadors of Mercy

“Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself; not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5;17-21)

Who has been an ambassador for Christ in your life?

In what ways have you been an ambassador for Christ in the lives of your children? Can you share an example?

What does God want for us?

“God loves every one of us with a depth and intensity that we can hardly begin to imagine. And he knows us intimately, he knows all our strengths and all our faults. Because he loves us so much, he wants to purify us of our faults and build up our virtues so that we can have life in abundance. ... Do not be afraid, but rejoice in his love for you.”

(Pope Benedict XVI, 4/18/2010)



You are encouraged to go to Formed.org and watch session two of the “Forgiven” series: [An Encounter with Mercy](#)

Review some of our main points so far:

Sacraments—*visible signs of God’s invisible grace—Christ is truly present*

Sacrament of Penance—*A Sacrament of Healing— healing the wound of sin*

Celebrating the Sacrament—*Cooperating with God’s grace—the priest in the person of Christ, the penitent from the dignity/identity of his Baptism*

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- “**I am not my sins**”—God sees the person behind the sins. What can lead a person to define himself by his sins? What effect does this have for that person?
- What is the difference between seeing Confession as **healing of a sin “wound”** rather than cleaning up a sin “stain”?
- In confession, why does the priest say “**I absolve you of your sin**” and not “God absolves you of your sin”?



The Sacrament of Penance: What Does the Catechism Teach Us?

- The Catechism teaches about the Sacrament of Penance in paragraph #'s 1420-1470
- This Sacrament is one of two **Sacraments of Healing**: The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, continues his work of healing through the Church.
- **Two-fold purpose of the Sacrament of Penance:**
 1. Obtain **pardon from God's mercy** for offense committed against Him
 2. **Reconciled with the Church** which they have wounded by their sins
- Jesus' first aim for us is **conversion of the heart**, interior conversion—a radical reorientation of our whole life toward God and a turning away from evil
- Interior conversion urges **expression in visible signs**, gestures and works of penance
- *Outward signs without interior conversion are sterile and ineffective; interior conversion without outward signs are weak and temporary*

Only God Forgives Sin

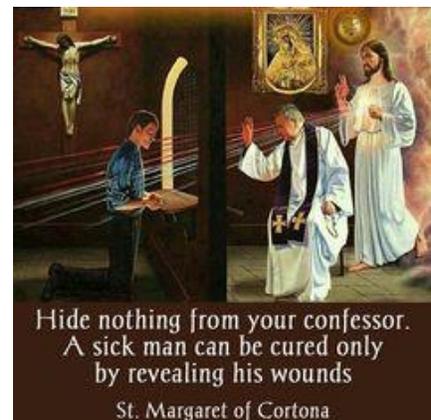
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has authority to forgive sins.
- Jesus passes on that authority to his apostles and to their successors.
- “The priest is the **sign and the instrument** of God's merciful love for the sinner. The confessor is not the master of God's forgiveness, but its servant.” CCC #1465-1466

The Seal of the Confessional

- “Every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to **keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins** that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make **no use of knowledge** that confession gives him about penitents' lives.” (CCC 1467)

When to Receive the Sacrament of Penance

- “After having obtained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to **confess serious sins at least once a year**”
- “Anyone who is aware of having **committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion** without having first received sacramental absolution”



- “Children must go to the sacrament of Penance **before receiving Holy Communion** for the first time.
- Confession of **everyday faults (venial sins) is strongly recommended** by the Church

Effects (Graces) of the Sacrament of Penance

- **Reconciliation with God**—joining us in **intimate friendship** with Him
- **Peace & serenity** of conscience—a **spiritual resurrection**
- **Reconciliation with the Church**—revitalizing the church and not just the sinner
- **Letting ourselves be healed** by Christ and **strengthened** in our life as His disciple

Prayer of Absolution

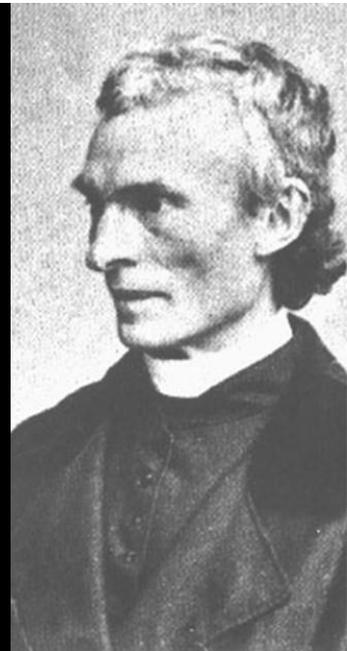
- “God, the merciful Father, by the death and resurrection of his Son has **reconciled the world to himself** and sent the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church **may he give you pardon and peace**. And I **absolve you from your sins**, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

God's mercy is magnanimous. He pardons generously and forever, for He knows not how to forget only half. He restores the joy of innocence and the honor of the first state. He pardons not as a man, but as God. He wishes us still to remember our sins, but with a thought of love, of gratitude, in order to laud His mercy which has pardoned them. And yet, we sometimes tremble and ask whether God has indeed pardoned our sins. Have you prayed earnestly that He would pardon them? Have you come with confidence that He might pardon them?

Yes. Well, then, God has pardoned them.

—*St. Peter Julian Eymard*

Eucharistic Virtue



Closing Prayer: The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:2-11)

²Early in the morning Jesus came again to the Temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in their midst ⁴they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her? ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with this finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”

This story takes place when Jesus came up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (a Fall festival celebrating the harvest and God’s provision for the people.

The leaders want to catch Jesus. If he says to stone her, then he can be turned in to the Romans for authorizing the death penalty when only the Romans could authorize capital punishment; but if he says not to stone her, then he is opposing Moses and he can be brought down as a false messiah.

Possible reference to Jer 17:13, that “those who forsake the Lord shall be written in the earth.”

What did Jesus write? Perhaps the sins of those who surrounded him.

Jesus avoids their trap and puts the impetus to act in their court—he is calling out their hypocrisy and evil intentions in using this woman to advance their plans to murder Jesus.

It is the eldest who exhibit the wisdom and humility of understanding Jesus’ challenge.

The woman remains, she does not flee when her accusers depart

The term “woman” is a term of respect (like “ma’am”).

Jesus does not condemn (see John 3:17), but instructs her to avoid sin now that she has received his forgiveness and salvation.



*You are not defined by your sins—
You are defined by the God who loved you into existence
and loves you into healing.*



1. Confess

CONFESS YOUR SINS ALOUD TO THE PRIEST, WHO LISTENS LOVINGLY ON BEHALF OF CHRIST & THE CHURCH.

THE PRAYERS OR GOOD DEEDS THE PRIEST GIVES YOU, TO BEGIN HEALING RELATIONSHIPS HURT BY YOUR SINS.

2. Receive Penance



3. Act of Contrition

A SIMPLE EXPRESSION TO GOD THAT YOU ARE SORRY FOR YOUR SINS & THAT YOU RESOLVE TO LEAVE SIN BEHIND.

THE WORDS THE PRIEST SPEAKS WHICH RECONCILE YOU TO GOD AND THE CHURCH.

4. Receive Absolution



AN ACT OF CONTRITION

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.