



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone  
who asks you for a reason for your hope"  
1 Peter 3:15

# The Sacraments of Healing Penance and Reconciliation & Anointing of the Sick

# The Sacraments of Healing

***Why did Christ institute the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick?***

*Christ, the physician of our soul and body, instituted these sacraments because the new life that he gives us in the sacraments of Christian initiation can be weakened and even lost because of sin. Therefore, Christ willed that his Church should continue his work of healing and salvation by means of these two sacraments.*

# The Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation

<sup>1440</sup> *“Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God’s forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation”*

# The Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation

- *What is the name of this Sacrament?*
- *Why is there a Sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?*
- *When did Jesus institute this Sacrament?*
- *What is Interior Penance?*
- *What are the essential elements of the Sacrament Reconciliation?*

# The Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation

- *What sins must be confessed?*
- *When am I obligated to confess mortal sins?*
- *Why do I confess venial sins?*
- *Who is the minister of this Sacrament?*
- *Is a confessor bound to secrecy?*

# The Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation

- *What are the effects of this Sacrament?*
- *Can this Sacrament be celebrated in some cases with a general confession and general absolution?*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz5-vu6A58E>

# The Sacrament of Confession

Many Protestants falsely assert that Sacrament of Reconciliation and confessing one's sins to a priest is unbiblical. Their rejection of this Sacrament is based on the notion that there no longer a human priesthood and that Jesus alone is our priest. They base this on certain Biblical text such as **Hebrews 7:22–25**, which says:

*“This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant. The former priests **were many in number**, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but **he holds his priesthood permanently**, because he continues for ever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives **to make intercession for them.**”*

This text, they say, **abolishes** the need for a human priesthood.

Furthermore, they add the following verse to their arsenal of “*proof*” against the idea of the priesthood:

**1 Timothy 2:5**, which says, “*For there is one God, and there is **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.***”

Christ, they say is the **only** mediator and there is no need for any other. Is that so? Let’s look at what the following verses have to say about that:

**Peter 2:5–9** says, “*Like living stones **be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.***”

In the Old Testament, there were **three** levels of Priests: Aaron, the High Priest, the **Levitical/Ministerial Priesthood**, and the rest of the people were a **general priesthood** of believers.

In the New Testament, there are **also** three levels of Priests: Jesus, our **High Priest (1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:22-25)**, the **Ministerial Priests (James 5:14-15)** and the **general priesthood** of all Christians (**1 Peter 2:5-9**).

While Jesus, whose sacrifice on our behalf is eternally present before the Father, is our priest, our intercessor, our mediator before the Father in a special sense – we are **ALL** called to be priests, mediators and intercessors.

St. Paul is emphatic about our intercessory function in **1 Tim. 2:1–2**, when he says, *“First of all, then, I urge that **supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions.**”*

In **1 Cor. 12:12-20**, he tells us that we are all parts of the same Body of Christ that support each other. He says that there should be no disunity among us and goes so far as to say that if one part of the Body suffers, **all** the parts suffer with it. Conversely, if one part is honored, **all** the parts share its joy. That is how *radically* we are joined to the Body of Christ.

It is ironic that Protestants will reject the idea that we can intercede for one another to God, yet they, too will pray for one another and ask each other for prayer. After all, aren't we told in **James 5:16** that *“the fervent prayer of a righteous person is efficacious?”*

The practice of telling our sins directly to a priest is based directly in Scripture. Three times in the Gospels (**Matt. 16:19, 18:18 and John 20:23**), we read where Jesus gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins or to hold them bound. This is not a something that Jesus took lightly. In **John 20:21-23**, Jesus (*who is God*) breathes on the Apostles as he is giving them this power:

*(Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**"*

*And when he had said this, **he breathed on them** and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. **Whose sins YOU FORGIVE are forgiven them, and whose sins YOU RETAIN are retained."***

## **QUESTION:**

**WHAT** did the Father send Jesus here to do?

*(answer in next page)*

Jesus came to **FORGIVE SINS**, thereby saving us.

He transferred this power to the leaders of His Church – to *forgive sins* in His name.

The fact that Jesus *breathed* on the Apostles when entrusted them with this ministry is highly significant because he doesn't do this anywhere else in the New Testament. In fact, there are only *two* times in **ALL** of Scripture where God breathes on man:

1. The **first** is when he breathed *life* into Adam.
2. The **second** is here in John's Gospel when he is giving them the power to *forgive or retain* sins.

Many Protestants will have you believe that Jesus was merely telling them that they now had the power to *recognize* sins – but that is **NOT** what he said (*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained*). The Greek word used here for the word “*forgive*” is *aphiemi*, which means: *to send away, to send forth, yield up, to expire, to let go, give up a debt, forgive, to remit.*

The practice of confessing your sins to the Church is an ancient one that goes all the way back to the Apostles themselves. We see this in the 1st century document, the **Didache** (*The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*), where it emphatically states the necessity of confessing our sins to the Church:

***“Confess your sins in Church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . , On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure”** (Didache 4:14,14:1 [A.D.70]).*

St. Paul makes no small case for this ministry of reconciliation clearly in **2 Cor. 5:18-20**:

*“And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and **given us the ministry of reconciliation**, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**. So we are **ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*

In **2 Cor. 2:10**, he states, *“Whomever you forgive anything, so do I. **For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for you in the presence of Christ.**”*

It is interesting to note that the Greek word St. Paul uses here for **“presence”** is *Prosopo*, which means Person. He is telling the Corinthians that he forgave sins *in the person of Christ*. In Latin, this is called *in persona Christi*.

# Early Church Fathers on Confession/Reconciliation

Confessing one's sins to the Church is a Scriptural reality (**John 20:21-23**) and one that the Early Church Fathers unanimously agreed upon. In fact - the only arguments that they had among each other regarding Confession usually revolved around punishments – and not Church Authority.

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## **The Didache**

“Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life . . . On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure” (*Didache* 4:14, 14:1 [A.D. 50]).

## **The Letter of Barnabas**

“You shall judge righteously. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify those that contend by bringing them together. You shall confess your sins. You shall not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light” (*Letter of Barnabas* 19 [A.D. 74]).

### **Ignatius of Antioch**

“For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ” (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 [A.D. 110]).

“For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop” (*ibid.*, 8).

### **Irenaeus**

“[The Gnostic disciples of Marcus] have deluded many women. . . . Their consciences have been branded as with a hot iron. Some of these women make a public confession, but others are ashamed to do this, and in silence, as if withdrawing from themselves the hope of the life of God, they either apostatize entirely or hesitate between the two courses” (*Against Heresies* 1:22 [A.D. 189]).

### **Tertullian**

“[Regarding confession, some] flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves, or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation, like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians; and thus they perish along with their own bashfulness” (*Repentance* 10:1 [A.D. 203]).

## **Hippolytus**

“[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command” (*Apostolic Tradition* 3 [A.D. 215]).

## **Origen**

“[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, ‘I said, “To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity””’ (*Homilies on Leviticus* 2:4 [A.D. 248]).

## **Cyprian of Carthage**

“The apostle [Paul] likewise bears witness and says: ‘ . . . Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord’ [1 Cor. 11:27]. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings; before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and at the hand of the priest . . . they do violence to [the Lord’s] body and blood, and with their hands and mouth they sin against the Lord more than when they denied him” (*The Lapsed* 15:1–3 [A.D. 251]).

### **Cyprian of Carthage**

“Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . . I beseech you, brethren, let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord” (ibid., 28).

“Sinners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion. [1 Cor. 11:27]” (*Letters* 9:2 [A.D. 253]).

### **Aphraahat the Persian Sage**

“You [priests], then, who are disciples of our illustrious physician [Christ], you ought not deny a curative to those in need of healing. And if anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance. And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public, lest because of it the innocent might be reckoned as guilty by our enemies and by those who hate us” (*Treatises* 7:3 [A.D. 340]).

### **Basil the Great**

“It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God’s mysteries is entrusted. Those doing penance of old are found to have done it before the saints. It is written in the Gospel that they confessed their sins to John the Baptist [Matt. 3:6], but in Acts [19:18] they confessed to the apostles” (*Rules Briefly Treated* 288 [A.D. 374]).

### **John Chrysostom**

“Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: ‘Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed.’ Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding; but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? ‘Whose sins you shall forgive,’ he says, ‘they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’ What greater power is there than this? The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men [Matt. 10:40; John 20:21–23]. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven” (*The Priesthood* 3:5 [A.D. 387]).

### **Ambrose of Milan**

“For those to whom [the right of binding and loosing] has been given, it is plain that either both are allowed, or it is clear that neither is allowed. Both are allowed to the Church, neither is allowed to heresy. For this right has been granted to priests only” (*Penance* 1:1 [A.D. 388]).

## **Jerome**

“If the serpent, the devil, bites someone secretly, he infects that person with the venom of sin. And if the one who has been bitten keeps silence and does not do penance, and does not want to confess his wound . . . then his brother and his master, who have the word [of absolution] that will cure him, cannot very well assist him” (*Commentary on Ecclesiastes 10:11* [A.D. 388]).

## **Augustine**

“When you shall have been baptized, keep to a good life in the commandments of God so that you may preserve your baptism to the very end. I do not tell you that you will live here without sin, but they are venial sins which this life is never without. Baptism was instituted for all sins. For light sins, without which we cannot live, prayer was instituted. . . . But do not commit those sins on account of which you would have to be separated from the body of Christ. Perish the thought! For those whom you see doing penance have committed crimes, either adultery or some other enormities. That is why they are doing penance. If their sins were light, daily prayer would suffice to blot them out. . . . In the Church, therefore, there are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptisms, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance” (*Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed 7:15, 8:16* [A.D. 395]).

# The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

1499 *“By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that he may raise them up and save them. And indeed she exhorts them to contribute to the good of the People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and death of Christ.”*

# The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

- *How was sickness viewed in the Old Testament?*
- *What is the significance of Jesus' compassion for the sick?*
- *What is the attitude of the Church toward the sick?*

# The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

- *Who can receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?*
- *Who administers the Sacrament?*
- *How is the Sacrament celebrated?*
- *The effects of this Sacrament*
- *What is Viaticum*
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEppjWNO2y4>

# The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

Whereas, many of the Sacraments are mentioned or alluded to in Scripture – most are not **explicitly** described. For example – in the Bible, Jesus gives us the ***formula*** for Baptism. However, He never states **HOW** we are to baptize.

In the passage that is known as “**The Great Commission**” (Matt. 28:16-20), our Lord tells the Apostles to baptize people: “***In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***”

There is no further instruction because earlier in His ministry – He had already ***showed*** His Apostles how to do it (John 3:22). Not **ONE** verse in **ALL** of Scripture tells us how to baptize an adult or an infant. We rely on Sacred Apostolic Tradition for that.

The Sacrament of **Anointing of the Sick**, however, ***IS*** explicitly described in Scripture.

# Sacraments in the Bible . . .

In **James 5:13-15**, we read the following explicit instruction:

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? ***He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord***, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. **If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.**

## Side Note:

The word “**Presbyter**” is where we get the word “**Priest**”. Here is the etymology of that word:

Old English ***preost*** probably shortened from the older Germanic form represented by Old Saxon and Old High German ***prestar***, Old Frisian ***prestere***, all from Vulgar Latin ***prester*** "priest," from Late Latin ***presbyter*** from Greek ***presbyteros***

# Early Church Fathers on Anointing of the Sick

As with virtually every other Catholic teaching – we read in the writings of the Early Church Fathers the importance and the efficacy of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

Their testimonies regarding this Sacrament once again show us that they were unashamedly Catholic . . .

## **Hippolytus**

If someone makes an offering of oil, the bishop shall give thanks in the same manner as for the oblation of the bread and wine. He does not give thanks with the same words, but quite similar, saying, "Sanctify this oil, God, as you give holiness to all who are anointed and receive it, as you anointed kings, priests, and prophets, so that it may give strength to all who taste it, and health to all who use it" (*The Apostolic Tradition* 5:1-2 [A.D. 215]).

## **Origen**

[The penitent Christian] does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine . . . [of] which the apostle James says: 'If then there is anyone sick, let him call the presbyters of the Church, and let them impose hands upon him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. (*Homilies on Leviticus* 2:4 [A.D. 250]).

## **Council of Nicaea**

Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum (Canon 13 [A.D. 325]).

## **Aphraates**

[O]f the sacrament of life, by which Christians [baptism], priests [in ordination], kings and prophets are made perfect; it illuminates darkness [in confirmation], anoints the sick, and by its secret sacrament restores penitents (*Treatises* 23:3 [A.D. 345]).

## **Serapion**

We beseech you, Savior of all men, you that have all virtue and power, Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we pray that you send down from heaven the healing power of the only-begotten [Son] upon this oil, so that for those who are anointed . . . it may be effected for the casting out of every disease and every bodily infirmity . . . for good grace and remission of sins . . . (*The Sacramentary of Serapion* 29:1 [A.D. 350]).

## **Ephraem**

They pray over thee; one blows on thee; another seals thee (*Homily 46* [ante **A.D. 373**]).

## **John Chrysostom**

The priests of Judaism had power to cleanse the body from leprosy—or rather, not to cleanse it at all, but to declare a person as having been cleansed. . . . Our priests have received the power not of treating with the leprosy of the body, but with spiritual uncleanness; not of declaring cleansed, but of actually cleansing. . . . Priests accomplish this not only by teaching and admonishing, but also by the help of prayer. Not only at the time of our regeneration [in baptism], but even afterward, they have the authority to forgive sins: “Is there anyone among you sick? Let him call in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he shall be forgiven” (*On the Priesthood* 3:6:190ff [**A.D. 387**]).

## **Ambrose**

Why, then, do you lay on hands, and believe it to be the effect of the blessing, if perchance some sick person recovers? Why do you assume that any can be cleansed by you from the pollution of the devil? Why do you baptize if sins cannot be remitted by man? If baptism is certainly the remission of all sins, what difference does it make whether priests claim that this power is given to them in penance or at the font? In each the mystery is one (*Penance* 1:8:36 [**A.D. 390**]).

## **Jerome**

There came also Constantia a holy woman whose son-in-law and daughter he had anointed with oil and saved from death (*Life of Saint Hilarion* 44 [A.D. 392]).

## **Cyril of Alexandria**

[I]f some part of your body is suffering...recall also the saying in the divinely inspired Scripture: “Is anyone among you ill? Let him call the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven” (James 5:14-15) (*Worship and Adoration*, 6 [A.D. 412]).

## **Pope Innocent**

[I]n the epistle of the blessed Apostle James...’If anyone among you is sick, let him call the priests... There is no doubt that this anointing ought to be interpreted or understood of the sick faithful, who can be anointed with the holy oil of chrism...it is a kind of sacrament (*To Decentius*, 25:8:11 [A.D. 416]).

### **Hilary of Arles**

Whenever some illness comes upon man, he should hurry back to the Church. Let him receive the body and blood of Christ, be anointed by the presbyters with consecrated oil and ask them and the deacons to pray over him in Christ's name. If he does this, he will receive not only bodily health but also forgiveness of his sins (*Sermon* 19:5 [circa **A.D. 440**]).

### **Caesar of Arles**

As often as some infirmity overtakes a man, let him who is ill receive the body and blood of Christ; let him humbly and in faith ask the presbyters for blessed oil, to anoint his body, so that what was written may be fulfilled in him: 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him. . . . See to it, brethren, that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will merit to obtain the forgiveness of his sins (*Sermons* 13[325]:3 [**A.D. 542**]).

### **Cassiodorus**

A priest is to be called in, who by the prayer of faith [oratione fidei] and the unction of the holy oil which he imparts will save him who is afflicted [by a serious injury or by sickness] (*Complexiones in Epp. Apostolorum* [**A.D. 570**]).