

The Sacrament of

Penance and Reconciliation

**Preparation & Celebration
Provisional Guidelines**

**Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Fall, 1996**

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PREFACE

As an essential element of the Catholic Faith the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation has many dimensions which, in each age and time, seem to evoke differing points of view and call for ongoing clarification and affirmation. For catechetical leaders, discussion of the sacrament extends beyond personal understanding and practice to include a large share in the responsibility of bringing meaning to the sacrament for all of the faith community, through sound theological, catechetical, and pastoral practice.

The purpose of these revised and expanded **Guidelines** is to affirm and support the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation within the life of the local faith community. As a collaborative effort of the Archdiocesan Offices of Catholic Education and Worship, the guide addresses both the catechetical and the liturgical aspects of the sacrament from the perspectives of **Family and Faith Community**. The guide also contains a separate section on **First Reconciliation of Children**.

*Christ's call to conversion continues
to resound in the lives of Christians.
This **second conversion** is an uninterrupted task
for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to
her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in
need of purification, [and] follows constantly
the path of penance and renewal" [Lumen Gentium 8].
This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work.
It is the movement of a "contrite heart" [Ps 51:17],
drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love
of God who loved us first.*

1428 - Catechism of the Catholic Church

POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE/RECONCILIATION
Archdiocese of Indianapolis, 1994
(with explanatory footnotes added, 1996)

9550.1 Catechesis on Reconciliation

Catechesis on reconciliation is to be ongoing, addressing the various stages of moral development.

9550.2 General Absolution

The exceptional use of the *Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution* requires the prior written permission of the archbishop.

9550.3 First Reconciliation of Children

a. **Catechesis** Those children who were baptized as infants and have attained the use of reason are to be prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance prior to First Eucharist.

Since this policy is based on Canon 914, it assumes that all children shall be offered the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of penance before their reception of first communion.

b. **Readiness.** The pastor, along with the parents and catechist(s) of the child, are to determine the readiness of the child to participate in the sacrament.

The pastor and his staff are also expected to explain to the parents the church's discipline in regard to first confession before first communion and the catechetical reasons for it. In those exceptional cases in which a child, under the guidance of his or her parents, chooses not to celebrate the sacrament of penance, he or she shall not be deprived of the right to receive first communion. However, the child shall be encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance later so that he or she will not be deprived of it altogether.

c. **Time for the Celebration.** The ideal time for the celebration of First Reconciliation is during the penitential season of Lent.

Even though Lent is an ideal time for the celebration of reconciliation, at times it may be necessary to prepare for and celebrate First Reconciliation during the Fall especially when the First Communion is to be celebrated during the following Spring.

History of the Sacrament

Before The Christian Era

In ancient Israel, a moral code, handed down by Yahweh through Moses and the prophets, served to maintain both internal and external order. Violations were considered to be a breach of the Covenant between Yahweh and the chosen people. Personal guilt figured prominently in transgressions from the religious/social order. Rectification rituals could range from exclusion from worship to torture and even death. Many of these penitential practices of the Torah continued through the time of the public ministry of Jesus.

Early Christianity

The rabbinical concept of “binding and loosing” or restricting and releasing because of sin and repentance was taken up by the early Christians acting on the authority of Jesus the Christ. In the gospel of Matthew (16:19) Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven with the directive to the disciples that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

While Jesus often preached forgiveness and healing, no single event in his life can be viewed as direct proof of the institution of sacramental reconciliation. The Church however, recognizes reconciliation as the sacrament of *peace* which evolved from the appearance of Jesus to his disciples on the evening of the First Easter when he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you”...and, “Whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained” (Jn 20:21-23).

From a ritual perspective Christian forgiveness took place in *baptism* inherent in which was a commitment to moral rectitude for one’s whole life. Yet sin was recognized and addressed pastorally through compassion, correction, and challenge to do right as the Church began to grow. The new Church could be only as moral and upright as its members.

The Patristic Church

During the second century there arose a need to deal with persons who, having fallen away from the faith through serious sin (e.g. apostasy, adultery, murder), once again renounced their sin and sought forgiveness. However, postbaptismal reconciliation could happen only one time and was viewed as a second chance for true conversion. Consequently, many persons waited until old age or even imminent death to seek the peace of Christ.

In the third century, this second conversion became a more public and formal reconciliation process known as “canonical penance.” Serious sinners could approach the bishop to confess and seek forgiveness. Except for being required to do public acts of penance, these individuals were treated like catechumens and after an appropriate (and often extended) time were formally welcomed back to the eucharistic table. From this serious ecclesial approach the “Order of Penitents” took shape. In some cases the required acts of penance continued even after the penitent’s formal reconciliation with the faith community. Less serious (venial) sins did not require canonical penance and were resolved through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and participation in the eucharist. By the end of the sixth century, coinciding with the decline of the catechumenate, the harsh practice of canonical penance fell into disuse. By then confession of serious sin had become almost always a deathbed experience.

The Middle Ages

In striking contrast to canonical penance, the seventh century marked the beginning of the individualized practice of “tariff-penance.” Sins were organized by severity and a code of appropriate penances for various sins took shape in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Penitential Books. Rooted in the experience of Irish monks who regularly confessed their sins to the abbot, the practice of private confession, penance, and absolution spread throughout the Christian world, accompanied by several rather radical developments. These changes included: confession to a priest, encouragement of frequent confession for the laity, and elimination of the requirement to return for absolution following completion of one’s penance. The shift to the personal from the ecclesial emphasis in reconciliation was hardly uneventful as many penitents found clever ways to circumvent their punishment by trading alms for doing penance or hiring someone else to carry it out.

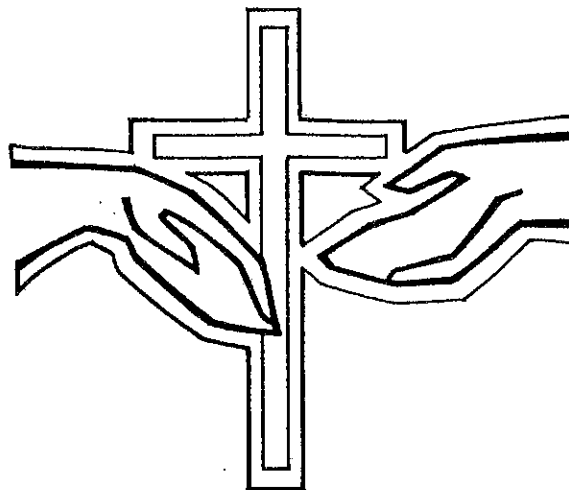
At the same time, individual bishops were trying to regulate the practice of confession in order to gain control over the misuse of the rapidly increasing number of Penitential Books and the diversity of the confessors. During the eighth century bishops began to request confession before the reception of communion for those with grave sin. Some dioceses even required everyone, serious sinner or not, to receive the sacrament two or three times a year. Finally, in 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council of Bishops made yearly confession the rule for all Catholics in the state of serious sin. The unofficial had become official with confession, penance, contrition, and absolution all coming together in a single event.

From Trent To Vatican II

In response to the criticism of the Reformation leaders Martin Luther and John Calvin who accused the Church of placing deeds and works above grace and faith within the sacrament of penance, the Council of Trent issued two distinct but related decrees. The first, *Decree on Justification* (1547) stating that God’s grace is freely given and the faithful can do nothing to gain it, provided a framework for the second, *Decree on the Sacrament of Penance* (1551). The Council stated definitively to the Reformers that the cooperation in God’s grace takes place in the sacrament. It also reserved absolution only to priests. Frequent individual confession remained the norm for years to come.

Vatican Council II

In the twentieth century, revived study of the sacrament, especially as it was celebrated during the patristic period, evoked a call for renewal in rite and formulae, “so that they more clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 72). The Council brought about major changes in ritual and a fuller expression of the theology of the sacrament. The Council also reaffirmed confession to a priest and the requirement of yearly reception of the sacrament for those in a state of serious sin.



Theology of Penance and Reconciliation

“What has happened in the life of Christ has passed over into the sacraments.”

(Pope Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome - 440-461)

Christian Reconciliation is rooted in Baptism, *one* Baptism for the *forgiveness of sins* and for the gracious gift of conversion to life in the living God. Through his life, death, and resurrection Jesus made it possible for human beings to be reconciled with God and experience the peace and healing of sacramental forgiveness. The Church, as the living Body of Christ, continues the mission of Christ and makes visible the power of God’s love over evil and death. The conversion experience of baptism is renewed over and over again in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Through the celebration of Holy Eucharist the faithful experience the mystery of Christ broken and poured out in his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins. The nurturing and healing power of the Eucharist strengthens an individual’s relationship with God and enables that person to be a source of nurturing and healing for others. The life of the community flows from the celebration of Eucharist and its power to heal through the gift of God’s real presence in Word and Sacrament. The celebration of Eucharist, therefore, has an essential role in the ongoing process of Penance and Reconciliation.

Sacramental Reconciliation is the expression of the healing ministry of Christ given to the People of God for ongoing conversion and witness to Christ living and present in the world. The sacrament strengthens all the baptized to be formed as Church and stand in the world as a “sign of conversion to God” (*Introduction to the Rite of Penance #4*). While the ordinary relationships of daily living provide the human experiences for healing and forgiveness, the actual celebration of the sacrament elevates the ordinary and celebrates God’s unlimited mercy and love. The call to celebrate Penance and Reconciliation resounds for both the individual believer and the entire faith community.

The lived experience of God’s grace carries with it the hope and trust that foster a deepening of faith and the capacity for action as a mature Christian. The wonderful mystery of grace--the loving presence of God--is that it is so free flowing. God trusts human beings to grow in faith; relationships with God are never forced. No matter how seriously a person may stray from a positive, loving relationship with God, a sinner’s life is never totally devoid of grace. Since grace is always present, the choice for conversion is always possible as well. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation celebrates both the reality of the present and the promise of full harmony and reconciliation in everlasting life.

A Word About Sin

In the first of his three New Testament letters, the Apostle John wrote “*if we say, ‘We are without sin,’ we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 Jn 1:8). One might wonder from this statement if a similarity might exist between the understanding of sin in the latter part of the First Century and way Christians think about sin today. Are sinners today simply in a state of denial or is there a new way of looking at sin? In response to both questions contemporary moral theologians and experts in the field of human growth and development would most likely turn to recent developments in the traditional understanding of personal sin. These developments have focused on the restoration of the original Scriptural meaning of “sin” as operative in the second half of the twentieth century. As the renowned moral theologian and author Bernard Haring once said: “Sin has no place in its own right. We treat it only as the power from which God has freed us and which threatens us only to the extent that we are lacking in our freedom for Christ and our faithfulness to him”.¹

As clear-cut and legalistic as personal sin may have been in the past, it has never stood apart from the context of a relationship. In the Old Testament the basic moral relationship was one of covenant or agreement between Yahweh and the chosen people. As Scripture scholars developed the tools to probe more deeply into the culture of the Old Testament, they realized that morality, while expressed in adherence to code, was truly authentic only in context of a faithful relationship with Yahweh, the loving Creator. Sin, therefore, was making the choice of saying “no” to a loving relationship with God and neighbor.²

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines sin as “an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods” (Par. #1489). By returning to the biblical notion of sin, theologians were able to articulate a clearer sense of the traditional categories of *mortal* and *venial* sins. “*Mortal sin* destroys charity in the heart by a grave violation of God’s law while *venial sin* allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (Par. #1855). “For a *sin* to be *mortal*, three conditions must together be met: ‘Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent’ ” (Par. # 1857).³

Another development in the understanding of sin has been the realization that contrition and reconciliation are not reserved only to personal sin but are also required for that which has come to be called *social sin*. Individual participation in worldly structures of sin can tear down human dignity, violate human rights, and contribute to oppression and abuse. Catholics are called to take a stand against these realities and join in efforts to change them. Indifference to social evils or refusal to act on behalf of justice for all is a serious matter for all Christians.

Notes

1. Haring, Bernard. *Free and Faithful In Christ*. New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1984, vol. 1, p. 404.
2. Martos, Joseph . *Doors To The Sacred*. Tarrytown, NY: Triumph Books, 1991, p. 308.
3. For a more complete explanation of SIN: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part Three: Life in Christ, Chapter One, Article 8.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in Daily Life

Just as reconciliation was at the core of the entire ministry of Jesus Christ, it is today the powerful reminder of the Church's sacramental witness to Christ alive and present in the world. For all Christians, their baptismal commitment to lifelong conversion is renewed over and over again in a conscious awareness of an abiding call to healing and forgiveness. The living sacrament of reconciliation is at the heart of the Catholic Christian life.

Recognizing that the daily life of a Christian provides the context for penance and reconciliation, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* devotes six paragraphs to *The Many Forms of Penance in Christian Life*:

1434 The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving*, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."

1435 Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right, by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance, of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.

1436 *Eucharist and Penance.* Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins."

1437 Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father--every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.

1438 *The seasons and days of penance* in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary work).

1439 *The process of conversion and repentance* was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father: the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy--all these are characteristic of the process of conversion. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life-- pure, worthy, and joyful-- anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ who knows the depths of his Father's love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way.

NOTE: The paragraphs cited and their related footnotes can be found in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, PART TWO: THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY, Article V, Pp. 360-361.

What's In A Name?

We can see part of the richness of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation from the ways we choose to name it. In 1423-42 the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says the following:

- It is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed by sin.
- It is called the *sacrament of Penance*, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.
- It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession" - an acknowledgement and praise - of the holiness of God and of God's mercy toward sinful people.
- It is called the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace".
- It is called the *sacrament of Reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God." Those who live by God's merciful love are ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled with your brother and sister".

None of these words alone expresses the completeness of this wonderful experience of God's love, but used together they help us to understand it more fully.

THE RECONCILING FAITH COMMUNITY

While the entire Church is responsible for shaping and celebrating the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, the expression of the Church's sacrament is most visible within the local parish community.

THE RECONCILING PARISH COMMUNITY:

- + Encourages frequent reception of the sacrament through homilies, adult education programs, opportunities for spiritual renewal, and other forms of catechesis.
- + Reminds the faithful of the obligation to confess serious sin at least once a year.
- + Publishes the times when the sacrament is celebrated in the church and makes those scheduled times and others convenient for the faithful.
- + Provides other opportunities for celebration of the sacrament, including Advent and Lenten services, reconciliation before confirmation, matrimony, and reception into the full communion of the Church.
- + Models healing and conversion in all areas of parish life.
- + Lives the Gospel in outreach and care for others, especially the poor and the marginalized.
- + Prays together for strength and healing.

An Act of Contrition

(Suggested in the Rite of Penance)

*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.*

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation *Liturgical Expression of God's Forgiveness*

Forms of Celebration

In response to the decree of Vatican Council II calling for a revision of the rite of formulas of penance to express more clearly the nature and effects of the sacrament, the *New Rite of Penance* was approved by Pope Paul VI and published by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1973. A most significant element of the *New Rite* has been the addition of the **Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents With Individual Confession and Absolution** that placed individual confession and absolution in the context of a celebration of the Word and emphasized the relation of the sacrament to the entire faith community.

Pope John Paul II, in his *Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance*, made these comments about the *Revised Rite*.

The first form -- reconciliation of individual penitents -- is the only normal and ordinary way of celebrating the sacrament, and it cannot and must not be allowed to fall into disuse or be neglected.

The second form -- reconciliation of a number of penitents with individual confession and absolution -- even though in the preparatory acts it helps to give greater emphasis to the community aspects of the sacrament, is the same as the first form in the culminating sacramental act, namely individual confession and individual absolution of sins. It can thus be regarded as equal to the first form as regards the normality of the rite.

The third form, however -- reconciliation of a number of penitents with general confession and absolution -- is exceptional in character. It is therefore not left to free choice but is regulated by a special discipline.

(Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance Forms of Celebration #32)



SECOND THOUGHTS ON THE RITE OF RECONCILIATION

Before and After The Revised Rite

(Adapted from "Second Thoughts on the Rite of Reconciliation" *Chicago Studies*, John E. Price & R. George Sarauskas)

	<u>Old Emphasis</u>	<u>New Emphasis</u>
Why receive the sacrament	To get forgiveness	To celebrate forgiveness
Confessor	Judge Intermediary between God and the penitent A passive listener A dispenser of absolution	Representative of the Community One who is with us A facilitator of prayer A celebrant
Penitent	Self-accuser	A "concelebrant"
Image of God	Judge, enforcer, God of Justice, Punishing	Father of the prodigal: compassionate, loving, merciful
Environment	Darkened box Anonymous voice	Pleasant room or communal space Interpersonal encounter
Matter for Confession	Complete listing of sins	How to do or love more in response to God's love
Format	Formal structure/formula	Many options/freedom from memorized norms
Penance	Formal prayers to expiate temporal punishment	Good works/penances to help heal and reform lives
Feelings	Guilt, sorrow, shame	Warmth, hope, healing, conversion
Fruit of the Sacrament	To get sacramental grace	To become reconciled with God and the Church; heal relationships
Name of the Sacrament	Confession and Penance	Penance and Reconciliation
Sin	Individual-solitary-acts specific-often mortal	Social-ecclesial-lifestyle-disharmony- Relatively infrequently mortal
Morality	Laws concerning things to avoid (bad actions)	How to live positively in response to the Spirit

RECONCILIATION CATECHESIS GUIDELINES

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Archdiocese of Louisville

From now onwards, then, we will not consider anyone by human standards: even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer. So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the older order is gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God's work: God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ.

2 Corinthians 5: 16-20

CRITERIA FOR RECONCILIATION CATECHESIS

In order to provide for a full and continuing catechesis for reconciliation, parish catechetical leadership is to do the following:

- Provide for catechesis throughout formal religious education which reflects both the "family" or relational base of reconciliation and the developmental level of the person (cf. Canon 779). To do this it is essential that specific reconciliation catechesis occur at all levels of formation – family, early childhood, primary, intermediate, early adolescence, later adolescence, young adult, middle adult, older adult, senior adult, parent and alienated or inactive community members.
- Provide a catechesis which helps people to:
 - Recognize the need for reconciliation and healing within everyone's life;
 - Confess their belief, individually and as a community, in the unconditional love and mercy of God;
 - Confess their own areas of sin, alienation and need;
 - Accept the healing love and mercy of God and of each other;
 - Discover new, reconciling ways to relate to God, neighbor and self;
 - Recognize that the goal of reconciliation is unity, a unity which is fully celebrated in Eucharist.
- Ensure that catechesis has a future orientation and:
 - Challenges participants to work toward creating a community of peace and reconciliation;
 - Helps a person focus on concrete new ways of living;
 - Has as a goal a community of reconciling adults.
- Provide formation opportunities which focus on areas in need of healing within the whole community, including reconciliation between alienated or inactive members and the church community.

RECONCILIATION CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

PRESUPPOSITIONS

- Adults continue to develop throughout their lives.
- Reconciliation has a place in this ongoing development.
- Adults need ongoing catechesis that centers reconciliation within their life experiences.
- The sacrament of Reconciliation takes place in the broader context of a life of reconciliation -- a life which at times needs the help of a group, companions, trained facilitators and a process through which to seek, find and celebrate reconciliation.
- Provide catechesis that targets key stages and issues of adult development:
 - Young adults and couples -- reconciliation in immediate relationships and the movement of relationships;
 - Middle adults -- reconciliation and social awareness/justice;
 - Older adults -- reconciliation of memories;
 - Senior adults -- reconciliation as a freeing from guilt, a sharing of wisdom and peace with others, a leading oneself to a new life;
 - Family member and parent(s) -- reconciliation in a family setting;
 - Alienated or inactive members of the church -- reconciliation of hurts within the church community.
- Design ritual celebrations of reconciliation specific to the needs and issues of differing adult groups.
- Provide catechesis that enables adults to understand and appreciate the various ritual options available for sacramental reconciliation.
- Provide adults with a variety of options for celebrating reconciliation.
- Provide adults with good modeling of reconciliation by being a person of reconciliation in relationships with others and by celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation as penitent.
- Provide community formation opportunities which focus on the understanding and practice of reconciliation within family and community.
- Provide a catechesis which incorporates important aspects of a healing process -- e.g., companions, connection with a group (peer ministry), time and format for establishing reconciliation, trained personnel.
- Design sacramental reconciliation celebrations and various types of parish reconciliation prayer experiences.
- Ensure that each sacramental celebration is appropriate according to both ritual guidelines and community needs.
- Regularly evaluate all reconciliation catechetical programs and personnel.

RECONCILIATION CATECHESIS FOR YOUTH

IN GENERAL

- Provide a catechesis which is fully integrated into the total youth ministry program and which specifically responds to the reconciliation needs of youth.
- Involve adults (catechists, priests, etc.) who have a special sensitivity to adolescent needs and concerns, especially as they listen for specific areas in need of reconciliation within the local youth community.
- Incorporate the development of critical reflection skills into the catechetical process as the essential means of integrating personal faith and daily life experience.
- Provide a catechesis which challenges young people to search and question their experiences of sin, alienation and reconciliation, to accept responsibility for their attitudes and choices and to effect reconciling change in themselves and in the community.
- Provide catechetical emphasis on needs, issues and current trends of youth as these impact their daily life experience.
- Provide opportunities for the use of music, videos, films and other elements of popular culture.
- Incorporate a variety of reconciliation prayer experiences into total youth ministry programs -- e.g., in formal catechesis, in retreat experiences or as a reflective dimension to outreach/social justice activities, etc.

EARLY ADOLESCENCE (Junior High)

- Recognize and incorporate the significance and impact of peer/group relationships in the catechesis.
- Incorporate a focus on reconciliation with self in the catechesis.
- Develop on a more personal level the skills of moral decision-making within the catechesis.
- Introduce the understanding, skills and celebration of the individual experience of sacramental reconciliation.

LATER ADOLESCENCE

- Recognize and incorporate the impact and deepening significance of intense interpersonal relationships in the catechesis.
- Develop further the skills of moral decision making in the catechesis.
- Provide a variety of options for celebrating reconciliation.

RECONCILIATION CATECHESIS FOR CHILDREN

IN GENERAL

- Provide a catechesis which is appropriate for the developmental level of the child.
- Provide a catechesis which is strongly family oriented in approach and structure.
- Recognize and respond to major pastoral areas for reconciliation within the families.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Recognize the importance of the young children's lived experiences of reconciliation in the home and child care environments.
- Provide opportunities to celebrate reconciliation with young children in a prayerful setting.

PRIMARY/INTERMEDIATE

- Incorporate specific catechesis on reconciliation at the primary and intermediate levels.
- Introduce the skills, understanding and celebration of the communal experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

NOTE

The **RELIGION CURRICULUM GUIDE** of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis is the foundation for Penance and Reconciliation catechesis for children, youth, and adults. Developed from the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, the guide contains an achievement standard (#8) for Part Two of the **Catechism: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery** as well as assessment categories for preschool through grade eight. (Guides for secondary and adult catechesis will be part of the revised **RELIGION CURRICULUM GUIDE** to be published early in 1997).

Scope and Sequence charts and correlation guides for approved religion textbooks are also available. Sacramental textbooks and programs provide a more in depth catechesis for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. A list of approved sacramental programs is included at the end of these guidelines.

Q. In some of the penance services I have been at, they treat the communal portion as a "preservice" to individual confessions. How can we better use this second form of the rite of penance?

A. Perhaps this situation is similar to the reform of the Mass. We used to see the "Mass of the catechumens" as a kind of instructional preparation for the "principal parts," the "Mass of the faithful." We have learned that the liturgy of the word is a principal part of the Mass along with the liturgy of the eucharist. We have developed the liturgy of the word and now see a need to re-emphasize and enhance the eucharistic prayer.

Reform moves slowly and we have not always been consistent in seeing the liturgy of the word as an essential part of the rite of penance. This is true in the individual reception of the sacrament, where it is often dropped, and in the communal rite, where it can be seen as almost unconnected to the individual encounter with the priest. Part of the difficulty is that the individual encounter, whether or not in a communal setting, is often not seen as a liturgy. Lack of vesture, the closed space of confessional or reconciliation room, and the anonymity of the screen all contribute to this.

It might be helpful simply to review the structure of both individual and communal liturgical settings.

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Communal</i>			
1. Gathering rite	Priest and penitent greet one another	Opening song, greeting and prayer			
2. Liturgy of the word	Priest and penitent share a scripture reading	One, two or three readings with psalmody and acclamation and homily	7. Proclamation of praise	Usually a one-line phrase	A psalm, hymn, litany or canticle, then a prayer of thanksgiving
3. Examination of conscience	Done before the meeting with the priest or with the priest's help	In silence or possibly in litany form	8. Concluding rite	Usually combined with above proclamation	A final blessing
4. Confession of sins and Lord's Prayer	Specific mention of sins—generalized confession (Act of Contrition or Lord's Prayer) follows the giving of penance	Prayer of contrition said in common (e.g., the Confiteor) and confession of specific sins made to a priest confessor individually			
5. Giving of penance	Follows individual confession of sins	Done individually after specific confession of sins to priest			
6. Absolution	Given individually following the giving of penance in both rites				

Note that in the communal rite there is no act of contrition done with the priest. In other words, the communal rite should not be construed as the individual rite framed by communal trimmings. Rather, the individual rite is a telescoped liturgy. Communal celebration is the normative model for the liturgy of penance and the individual rite of penance is a compact form of this fuller celebration.

Some of the mistakes made frequently in the communal celebration are to omit the general confession and Lord's Prayer or to conclude the communal aspect before the individual encounter with the priest takes place. This latter practice makes the communal ingredients look like an unnecessary addition. When the communal ingredients are planned carefully and executed well with a full complement of the various ministries, the rite will flow as a whole and the first parts will be recognized and experienced as integral to the sacrament.

—Michael Ahlstrom

RITE OF RECONCILIATION FOR SEVERAL PENITENTS
WITH INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Hymn (seasonal)
Greeting
Introduction
Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (The number of scripture readings may vary according to the pastoral need.
If only one reading is chosen, it is preferable that it is a gospel reading.)
(cf. #51)

Responsorial Psalm
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel
Homily
Examination of Conscience (silence / litany or statements)

RITE OF RECONCILIATION

General Confession of Sins (I confess ...)
Litany or Song
Our Father

INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION
(procession with hymns)

Proclamation of praise for God's mercy
Concluding Prayer

CONCLUDING RITE

Blessing
Dismissal
(hymn)

RITE OF RECONCILIATION OF SEVERAL PENITENTS
General Confession with Litany (#54)

Cantor, Deacon, or other minister:

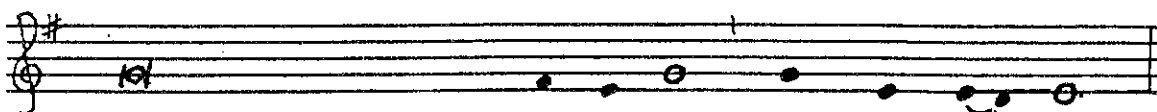
(All may kneel.)

My brothers and sisters, let us call to mind the goodness of God, and acknowledge our sins, so that we may receive merciful forgiveness.

All: I confess to almighty God...

(All stand.)

Cantor: Christ, our Savior, is our advocate with the Father:
with humble hearts let us ask him to forgive us our sins.



You came to call sinners, not the just. Lord, have mer - cy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Cantor: You were sent with good news for the poor and healing for the contrite.
Lord, have mercy. *All repeat.*

You forgave the many sins of the woman who showed you great love...

You did not shun the company of out-casts and sinners.

You carried back to the fold the sheep that had strayed.

You did not condemn the woman taken in adultery, but sent her a-way in
peace.

You called Zaccheus to repentance and a new life.

You promised Paradise to the re-pen-tant thief.

You are always interceding for us at the right hand of the Father.

Cantor: Now, in obedience to Christ himself, let us join in prayer to the Father,
begging forgiveness as we forgive others.

All: *(sung or recited)* Our Father...

Priest: O God, our source of life, you know our weakness.

May we reach out with joy to grasp your hand and walk more readily
in your ways.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

MUSIC FOR THE RITE FOR RECONCILIATION OF SEVERAL PENITENTS

Opening Song (praise of God's mercy, kindness, and compassion; expression of confidence; plea for pardon and strength)

-General

Amazing Grace
Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive
I Heard the Voice of Jesus
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
What Wondrous Love Is This

-Advent

Creator of the Stars of Night
On Jordan's Bank
Come, O Long Expected Jesus

-Lent

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
O Healing River
Hosea

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 16: You will show me the path of life
Psalm 33: Let your mercy be on us
Psalm 51: Have mercy on me, Lord
Psalm 85: Lord, let us see your kindness
Psalm 90: Fill us with your love, O Lord
Psalm 91: Be with me, Lord
Psalm 95: If today you hear his voice
Psalm 103: My soul, give thanks to the Lord
Psalm 130: With the Lord, there is mercy

(Gospel Acclamation)

Litany or Hymn with General Confession

-Litany: See Rite of Penance, numbers 54 and 202-205 and attached sheet.
-Hymn: See above.

Music during individual confessions:

- Instrumental music
- Reflective choral songs
- Responsorial songs (with long interludes):
 - Attende, Domine (Hear us, almighty Lord)
 - Be Not Afraid
 - I Have Loved You
 - Grant To Us, O Lord
 - See psalm list above
 - Seasonal music (Advent, Lent)
- Recorded music

Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy

- Song of Mary (Magnificat)
 - Psalm 136 (God's mercy lasts forever)
 - Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
 - Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven
 - Other psalms or songs listed above
-

Songs for Reconciliation of Children

From Hymnal for Catholic Students (GIA or LTP)

- Bring Forth the Kingdom
- Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love
- Jesus , Remember Me
- Somebody's Knockin' at Your Door
- The King of Glory
- This Little Light of Mine

From Young People's Glory and Praise (OCP)

- Jesus, Jesus
- Our God Is a God of Love
- Pardon Your People
- Peace Is Flowinig
- Peace Time
- Prayer of St. Francis

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