

LENTEN COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICE

(Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution)

In preparing us as the faithful for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Lent opens our hearts and minds to the wonder of God's great love for all creation. We renew ourselves through an experience of this great love in the Sacrament of Penance that the effect of Christ's act of transforming love may ever enrich our lives in love and service to one another.

OPENING HYMN

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Presider: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  and of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen

Presider: Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Assembly: And with your spirit.

Presider: My brothers and sisters, God knows our needs before we ask
and in our asking prepares us to receive the gift of grace.
As we make our journey through this Lenten season,
let us open our lives to God's healing presence,
forsaking all that separates us from God and from our neighbor.
Let us be mindful not only of personal evil
but also of our communal sins of family, class, race, and nation.
Let us confess to God whatever has wounded us
or brought injury to others,
that we may receive mercy and become for each other
ministers of God's grace.

Let us pray: (pause)

Almighty and merciful Father,
send your Holy Spirit to inspire and strengthen us,
so that by always carrying
the death of Jesus in our bodies
we may also show forth
the power of his risen life in all we say and in all we undertake.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Assembly: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

If there are several readings a psalm or other appropriate song or even a period of silence should intervene between them, so that everyone may understand the Word of God more deeply and give it heartfelt assent. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from the Gospel. (Rite of Penance, 51)

First Reading: Isaiah 53:1-7, 10-12

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 22
Father, your will be done.

Second Reading: I Peter 2:20b-25

Verse at the Gospel Acclamation:
You were given up to death for our sins
and rose again for our justification.

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Homily

RITE OF RECONCILIATION

Examination of Conscience

A form of the Examination of Conscience is suggested below. Another form may be found in Appendix III of the Rite of Penance. Both forms may be adapted to meet the needs of the faithful gathered. A period of silence should always be included so that each person may personally examine his or her conscience.

Examination of Conscience is prayer and every prayer we make through Jesus Christ; cut off from him we can do nothing. The stronger my faith the greater my sense of emptiness and of God's goodness.

Am I thankful for God's irrevocable gift of himself to me in Christ? For his gift of everyone as a brother and sister?

Am I thankful for myself, chosen in Christ even with these qualities and failings?

Am I thankful for everything: even the harsh and painful aspects of life which lead me to the Father through the Cross and Resurrection of his Son?

Thanksgiving helps me to discover God's daily gifts and gradually to recognize that all is gift.

What have I got to be grateful for today? How much do I take for granted?

What has made me ungrateful, dissatisfied, frustrated? Am I becoming more grateful and content?

Only the Holy Spirit can help me to know myself as a son/daughter of the Father and a companion of Jesus. I need to have my eyes opened. I need light to see whether my gratitude is in proportion to the worth of so many gifts. The Holy Spirit teaches me each day about Christ, about my life in Christ and about my use and acceptance of gifts. What has the Spirit taught me in these last days and months?

Too much attention to our own victories and failures can make us self-absorbed and confirm us in the illusion that we manage our own lives. Examination is rather a question of asking how I respond to God's loving action in my life:

How was I drawn to God today: a friend, an event, a book, the beauty of nature?
Have I learned anything about God and His ways: in ordinary occasions, spare moments?

Did I meet Him in: fears, joys, work, misunderstandings, weariness, suffering?
Did His Word come alive in: prayer, scriptures, liturgy?

Did I bring Christ to my community? Did they bring Christ to me?
Have I been a sign of God's presence and love to the people I met today?

Did I go out to: the lonely, the sorrowful, the discouraged, the needy?
Was I aware of God's work in my own locality, my country, in other nations of the world, in the Church at large?

Have I had a keener sense of being loved, of sinfulness, of desire to give back what I have received, of dependence?
Is there some part of my life still untouched by Jesus Christ and where He is calling me to a change of heart?

How am I aware of my sinfulness as a gift granted in love by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. How can I express sorrow for the ways in which I have failed to respond to God's love at work in me?

How do I recognize the many ways and the many wonders at constantly being brought home?
What does it mean for me to share in the victory of Christ? How can I express joy and gratitude because I share in the victory of Christ? Do I work and live not to trust so much in myself and yet grow in trust in God? How do I express serene acceptance of my weaknesses? What points me in the direction and the conviction that I am being converted from a sinner into a son/daughter of God?

How do I face the future? With apathy, distaste, fear, despondency? Which parts of my life particularly call for the Lord's healing and protection? The more I trust in God and allow him to lead me, the more I experience hope in him, who raises me up from weakness, poverty and pain to the joy of His Resurrection.

Act of Repentance

Presider: My brothers and sisters, the hour of God's favor draws near, the day of his mercy and of our salvation, when death was destroyed, and eternal life began. This is the season for planting new vines to ensure a richer harvest, and so we pray:

Reader: God our creator, your will for us and for all your people is health and salvation. Lord in your mercy:

Assembly: hear our prayer.

Reader: Jesus Christ, Son of God, you came that we might have life and have it in abundance. Lord in your mercy:

Assembly: hear our prayer.

Reader: Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, you make us temples of your presence. Lord in your mercy:

Assembly: hear our prayer.

Presider: Together we acknowledge our need for God's help and our restoration:

Assembly: I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

The Lord's Prayer

Presider: And now with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:
Our Father . . .

Assembly: who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Presider: Almighty and eternal God,
your sons and daughters stand before you
in humility and trust.
Hear the prayers we offer from contrite hearts.
Have pity on us as we acknowledge our sins.
Lead us back to the way of holiness.
Protect us now and always from the wounds of sin.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways
to the glory of your holy name.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Assembly: Amen.

Introduction to the Places of Confession and Invitation to the Sacrament

Presider: Because we are many, we invite those seeking the sacrament to be mindful of the many seeking the graces of the sacrament in a limited amount of time. Those seeking spiritual direction or personal counseling are asked to consider another time for this ministry. The priests will be in the body of the church and welcome you for individual confession. Those sitting in the church are asked to pray for those celebrating the sacrament and to remain in the church until the end of the liturgy to express our solidarity as a community. At this time, I invite the priests, who have generously joined us to celebrate this sacrament, to take their places in the church.

Individual Confession and Absolution

The assembly remains seated and penitents move to a confessor when one becomes available. As the penitents approach, they greet the priest with the Sign of the Cross and confess their sins. After receiving absolution, penitents return to their places in the assembly to pray.

CONCLUDING RITES

Presider: God and Father of us all,
your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.
You have forgiven our sins and sent us your peace.
Help us to forgive each other
and strengthen us in all goodness
by the power of your Holy Spirit
to work together to establish your peace in the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Assembly: Amen.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

Assembly: And with your spirit.

Presider: May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son,  and the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen.

Presider: The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.

Assembly: Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN