

Notes
Presentation on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
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Two characteristics of every sacrament:

1. They are a free and loving gift from God.
2. They are meant to build up and strengthen the individual who receives them and also the whole Christian community.

How is this true for Baptism?

For Eucharist?

For Marriage?

How might it be true for the sacrament of Reconciliation?

St. Benedict: “*Christians should be living a continuous Lent throughout the year.*”

What’s the purpose of Lent? Not primarily practicing fasting or finding time for “extra prayer” or being more conscious about acts of charity. These practices are means to an end.

Real purpose of Lent [Real goal of discipleship] → Conversion of heart / Metanoia.

What metanoia *doesn't* mean: “Clean up your act.” “Say you’re sorry.” Making unrealistic resolutions regarding e.g., patience, scolding, talking about other people. Correcting these bad habits requires more than my own strength of will. Confession is a means of God healing (gradually, over time) these habits that keep me from being my best self.

What metanoia *does* mean: Try to see things in a different way. Get your priorities straight. Allow God to stretch your heart so that it becomes more like the heart of Jesus → love, serve, forgive ... more easily, more unconditionally.

Metanoia means looking *inwardly* but also *outwardly*.

Looking inwardly: Begin with your major relationships: spouse/partner, children, siblings, closest friends, etc. What are my priorities as a _____? Are my attitudes, actions, words in line with my priorities? If not, what do I do about it?

Looking outwardly: I am also a member of a Church community, a neighborhood community, a city, a nation. What are my priorities as a _____? Are my attitudes, actions, words in line with my priorities? If not, what do I do about it?

What do sacramental confession, Eucharist, and private prayer for forgiveness have in common?

Eucharistia primum sacramentum reconciliationis. Eucharist is the primary sacrament of reconciliation.

How do sacramental confession, Eucharist and private prayer for forgiveness differ?

Grave sin versus sin which is not as serious. (Not very helpful to think in terms of mortal sin and venial sin.)

Actual Practice of Confession

The Latin word *confessio* → praise / admission of shortfall. Sacramental confession is the moment I stand humbly before God; I take stock of my life and acknowledge the whole truth about who I am—good as well as bad. None of us is one hundred percent good, but neither are we one hundred percent evil.

My personal practice of confession:

4 times a year: roughly when the seasons change to the same priest.

One area where I have been “successful” in growing as a disciple.

I’ve been praying more regularly

I haven’t always been successful, but I’ve been more intentional about practicing patience toward ...

I’ve worked on being more generous in reaching out to friends, family members, parishioners.

This is not “patting myself on the back.” This is “praising God / thanking God for strengthening me in this particular area.

One area where I have been struggling as a disciple.

I have been unable to forgive someone (to whatever degree I’m able at this moment. Don’t set unrealistic goals.)

I feel an ongoing resentment to someone because ... (lack of recognition, their preference for other people, their lack of cooperation with me, etc.)

Any grave sin or sins

Spousal Infidelity or breaking priestly vow of celibacy.

Intentionally maligning another person which results in significant hurt (loss of reputation, employment, etc.)