

Chapter 1 : blog.quintoapp.com - General Absolution

In other words, if/when the extraordinary circumstances that necessitated the use of general absolution come to an end, and the penitent is then able to go to private confession, he must do so. Persons who receive general absolution are supposed to be told of this obligation at the time it is administered (c.).

A controversy first resulted over Montanism , whose main supporter was Tertullian. There were arguments between Novatian and Pope Cornelius , and between St. Cyprian and Pope Stephen I. Special canons were issued by regional, local Church councils on how to deal with the public penance. Because of that it is called canonical penance. Acts of ancient councils of this period show that no one who belonged to the order of penitents had access to Eucharistic communion "until the bishop reconciled him with the community of the Church. Canon 29 of the Council of Epaone in Gaul says, that from among penitents only apostates had to leave Sunday assembly together with catechumens , before the Eucharistic part commenced. Other penitents were present until the end but were denied communion in the table of the Lord. Bishops gathered in that council were convinced that it was useful for the salvation of the faithful when the diocesan bishop prescribed penance to a sinner as many times as he or she would fall into sin canon 8. The practice of so-called tariff penance was brought to continental Europe from the British Isles by Hiberno-Scottish and Anglo-Saxon monks. It had no knowledge of the institution of a public penance in the community of the church which could not be repeated, and which involved canonical obligations. Celtic penitential practices consisted of confession, acceptance of satisfaction fixed by the priest, and finally in reconciliation. They date back to 6th century. Penitential books native to the islands provided precisely determined penances for all offences, small and great. That kind of penance is called tariff penance. Note the veiled crucifix, indicating that it is Passiontide. Beginnings of practising the sacrament of penance in the form of individual confession as we know it now, i. The words of the Lord, "Receive the holy Spirit; whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" John However, private confession was still used for private sins. For example, it would not have been unusual for someone to receive a year penance [25] for committing the sin of abortion, which the Catholic Church considers to be a grave or mortal sin. During the Counter-Reformation of the 16th century, confession became less of a public declaration of loyalty to the Church and more of a private affair. Since the Council of Trent , compulsory annual confession was required only of those conscious of mortal sin. It was a change in emphasis from reconciliation with the Church to reconciliation directly with God; and from emphasis on social sins of hostility to private sins, called the "secret sins of the heart". The provision of a fixed grille is required by the Code of Canon Law. This further distinguished the role of penance from forms of psychotherapy. Quoting the Epistle to the Romans 8: Catholics believe that no priest, however pious or learned, has of himself the power to forgive sins apart from God. However, through the absolution that the priest imparts God grants forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Church. A local ordinary may grant any priest, either permanently or for a limited time, the faculty to hear confessions, but is obliged to make sure by an examination or some other adequate means that the priest has the knowledge and character to do so. If the priest belongs to a religious institute , he is not to exercise this faculty without the at least presumed permission of his religious superior. The Pope, as the supreme earthly Catholic judge, and all cardinals have the right to hear confessions of any Catholic anywhere in the world by virtue of canon law. A Catholic of one rite may have a confessor of another rite in communion with Rome. Major superiors, rectors of seminaries and heads of houses of formation, and heads of novitiates should not ordinarily be the ones to hear the confessions of those they supervise unless the person freely requests it of them they may not make use of any information learned in confession when they are disciplining their charges because of the seal of confession. He acts in persona Christi. In the Roman Rite , celebration of the sacrament may begin with a greeting or blessing by the priest, who invites the penitent to have trust in God. It has been state a time since my last confession," or using more informal language. The mention of time is to establish whether there is a habit of serious sin that may not be repented. It may be omitted if there are no mortal sins. Mortal sins must be confessed within at most a year and always before receiving Holy Communion, while confession of venial sins also is recommended. The

priest imparts absolution. Since the Council of Trent, the essential words of absolution have been: Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace. May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. The older form stressed: The Catholic Church teaches that the individual and integral confession and absolution as opposed to collective absolution is the only ordinary way in which a person conscious of mortal sins committed after baptism can be reconciled with God and the Church. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church have insisted on this point in order to avoid confusion, as both confidential processes have distinct roles in church life. The rite presents the sacrament in three different ritual forms: The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents "is similar to the way most Roman Catholics remember "confession"; however, provision is made for the reading of sacred Scripture, and the penitent is given the option of speaking to the priest face-to-face or remaining anonymous usually behind a grille. The priest gives a suitable penance and may offer advice. The priest pronounces absolution the formula of absolution was revised and extended and the rite concludes with a short thanksgiving. Private confession and reconciliation follow and a final thanksgiving, blessing and dismissal. Paul VI said in that he hoped this communal rite would "become the normal way of celebration," since all sacrament are meant to be celebrated in community. The Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution "is similar to the second, except that the penitents do not make an actual confession, but only manifest contrition general confession. The prayer of absolution is given collectively or "generally" to all those gathered to celebrate the sacrament general absolution. The penitents are obliged to actually confess each grave sin in their next confession. This rite has been discouraged for widespread use by the Vatican in many countries recently. Frequency of reception[edit] A modern confessional in a Latin Catholic Church. The penitent may kneel on the kneeler or sit in a chair not shown , facing the priest. Frequent confession Canon of the Code of Canon Law states: There is never a strict obligation to confess venial sins, or to go to Confession if one has no mortal sins to confess. The sacrament of Penance is also known as the sacrament of peace. Because of what he considered misinformation about this sacrament, John Paul II recommended this practice and warned that those who discourage frequent reception of the sacrament "are lying. Ignatius of Loyola , patron of spiritual exercises in the Church. Ignatius called this examen the most essential spiritual practice for Jesuits.

Death-bed penitence involved (1) confession to the priest, (2) admission to the status of the penitent, (3) reconciliation by the priest, at least by the Viaticum. Caesarius teaches that Penance may be accorded twice.

Traditional confessional from Sicily. Absolution is an integral part of the Sacrament of Penance, in Roman Catholicism. The priest then assigns a penance and imparts absolution in the name of the Trinity, on behalf of Christ Himself, using a fixed sacramental formula. The traditional formula is: Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat; et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo ab omni vinculo excommunicationis suspensionis et interdicti in quantum possum et tu indiges. May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you; and by His authority I absolve you from every bond of excommunication suspension and interdict, so far as my power allows and your needs require. The current formula, after the liturgical reforms of 1969, is: The essential part of the formula the words which must be said for the absolution and the entire Sacrament of Penance to take effect, or, in Church law terms, be "sacramentally valid" are: However, for certain especially grave sins to be forgiven and for the accompanying Church penalties to be lifted, there are formal processes which must take place along with the absolution, which must then be given depending on the seriousness of the type of sin either by the Pope through the Apostolic Penitentiary, the local Bishop, or a priest authorized by the Bishop. This formula is preceded by other short prayers similar to those used at Mass after the Confiteor. Suspension, in the context of the formula for absolution, refers to a canonical penalty which can be incurred only by clerics; therefore, it is omitted when absolving a layman. Some priests use, in both the ancient and the more recent form, a short prayer for the spiritual well-being of the penitent: Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi, merita Beatae Mariae Virginis et omnium sanctorum, quidquid boni feceris vel mali sustinueris sint tibi in remissionem peccatorum, augmentum gratiae et praemium vitae aeternae. May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints and also whatever good you do or evil you endure be cause for the remission of your sins, the increase of grace and the reward of life everlasting. This prayer shows the concepts of merit and the Communion of Saints in the greater context of grace as understood in Catholic theology. The penitent is still responsible for the temporal punishment Purgatory associated with the confessed sins, unless an indulgence is applied or, if through prayer, penitence and good works, the temporal punishment is cancelled in this life. General absolution[edit] General absolution, where all eligible Catholics gathered at a given area are granted absolution for sins without prior individual confession to a priest, is lawfully granted in only two circumstances: The diocesan bishop must give prior permission before general absolution may be given under this circumstance. It is important to note that the occurrence of a large number of penitents, such as may occur on a pilgrimage or at penitential services is not considered as sufficient to permit general absolution. The second circumstance is thus envisaged more for mission territories where priests may visit certain villages only a few times a year. For a valid reception of general absolution, the penitent must be contrite for all his mortal sins and have the resolution to confess, at the earliest opportunity, each of those mortal sins forgiven in general absolution. Anyone receiving general absolution is also required to make a complete individual confession to a priest as soon as possible. An historical example is the absolution given by Fr. Contemporary examples of general absolution are the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, where general absolution was granted to all Catholics endangered by the incident, [4] and the FDNY firefighters, many of whom were Italian and Irish, who were granted general absolution by local priests before heading into the burning World Trade towers on September 11, The absolution of the dead does not forgive sins or confer the sacramental absolution of the Sacrament of Penance. The absolution of the dead is only performed in context of the Tridentine Mass. Eastern Orthodox Churches[edit] Eastern Orthodoxy is made up of a loose confederacy of Christian churches in the Eastern tradition and the eastern region, sharing the same or similar doctrine and practice. As a professed Christian Congregation, Eastern Orthodoxy is the second largest Christian church in the world, [6] with an estimated 250 million adherents, [7] primarily in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and the Middle East. It claims and teaches that it is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church established by Jesus Christ in his Great Commission [8] to the disciples almost 2,000 years ago. And both have similar views on

repentance and absolution. Russian Orthodox theologians all hold that the Church possesses the power to forgive sins, where there is true repentance and sincere confession. The form in use at present is as follows: Anglican sacraments In the Church of England and in the Anglican Communion in general, formal, sacramental absolution is given to penitents in the sacrament of penance now formally called the Reconciliation of a Penitent and colloquially called "confession. Often, physical actions accompany an absolution. A priest or bishop makes the sign of the cross over the congregation. Those receiving the absolution may make the sign of the cross as well. At minimum, Anglican prayer books contain a formula of absolution in the daily offices , at the Eucharist , and in the visitation of the sick. The first two are general, akin to the liturgical absolution in use in the Roman Church; the third is individual by the very nature of the case. The following is the form of absolution for the sick in the Book of Common Prayer: And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Our expression of repentance is answered by the absolution in which forgiveness is proclaimed: He extends His parental forgiveness. He cleanses us of all unrighteousness, thus removing the consequences of the previously unconfessed sin. We are back on track to realise the best plan that He has for our lives. Hence, these Oriental Orthodox churches are also called Old Oriental churches, Miaphysite churches , or the Non-Chalcedonian churches, known to Western Christianity and much of Eastern Orthodoxy as Monophysite churches although the Oriental Orthodox themselves reject this description as inaccurate, having rejected the teachings of both Nestorius and Eutyches. Slow dialogue towards restoring communion began in the mid-th century. Armenians[edit] Denzinger , in his *Ritus Orientalium* , gives us a full translation of the penitential ritual used by the Armenians. The present version is from the ninth century. The form of absolution is declarative, though it is preceded by a prayer for mercy and for pardon. It is as follows: May all thy good works be for thee an increase of merit, may they be for the glory of life everlasting, Amen. This finished, the priest recites over them the prayer said at the beginning of the Mass, the prayer asking pardon and forgiveness from God; to this is added the so-called "Benediction", which Father Bernat says is like the prayer said in the Latin Church after absolution has been imparted. Hyvernat, however, asserts that Father Bernat is mistaken when he likens the Benediction to the *Passio Domini*, for it is like the Latin prayer only inasmuch as it is recited after absolution. The present Jacobite Church not only holds and has held the power to absolve from sin, but its ritual is expressive of this same power. Denzinger *Ritus Orientalium* has preserved for us a 12th-century document which gives in full the order of absolution. In the *Large Catechism* and therefore also the *Book of Concord* he speaks of absolution as "the third Sacrament", stating "And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance, as it is really nothing else than Baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man that his lusts be restrained and entering upon a new life? They, like Roman Catholics, see James 5: Here the person confessing known as the " penitent " confesses his individual sins and makes an act of contrition as the pastor, acting in persona Christi , announces this following formula of absolution or similar: The opinions expressed by some reformers in their later theological works do not differ as markedly from the old position as one might suppose. If confession had aught of good it was merely as direction. John Calvin denied all idea of sacramentality when there was question of Penance. The *Second Helvetic Confession* denies the necessity of confession to a priest, but holds that the power granted by Christ to absolve is simply the power to preach to the people the Gospel of Jesus, and as a consequence the remission of sins: *Liberal Catholic Church International* states: We teach that Christ has given to the Priests of His Church the power to absolve the repentant faithful from their sins. We teach that the Sacrament of Absolution is a loosening from the bondage of sin, a restoration of the inner harmony that was disturbed by the wrongdoing, so that the person can make a fresh start toward righteousness.

Chapter 3 : Penance | Catholic Answers

The Thomists in general and other eminent theologians, e.g., Bellarmine, Toletus, Francisco Suárez, and De Lugo, hold the same opinion. According to Scotus (In IV Sent., d. 16, q. 1, n. 7) "the Sacrament of Penance is the absolution imparted with certain words" while the acts of the penitent are required for the worthy reception of the sacrament.

Related Media By his own admission, old Joe was not a religious man. He had never gone to church. He lived a pretty wild life. He drank too much, gambled a lot, swore without even thinking about it, and was not above lying and cheating when it was to his advantage. He thought that Christians were missing out on all the fun in life. He never thought much about God. Not until recently, that is. Joe had retired and was looking forward to doing a lot of fishing. He had been having some stomach troubles. Probably too much beer, he thought. It had spread to several organs. Joe might have six months to live, maybe less. Joe had a nephew who was a Christian. For the first time in his life, Joe listened with interest. What the pastor was saying seemed to make sense. It dawned on Joe that he had lived his whole life in a selfish, sinful manner. But the pastor said that Jesus Christ had died on the cross to pay the penalty that he deserved. He offered forgiveness of sins and eternal life as a free gift if Joe would receive it. Joe prayed to receive Christ. He died in peace shortly after, a deathbed conversion. Can a person live his entire life in sin, but get saved at the very last moment? Are deathbed conversions possible? We can look for evidence of conversion, but the troublesome thing about deathbed conversions is that the person often does not live long enough to give much evidence of true conversion. So we might be inclined to doubt the possibility of deathbed conversions and give up sharing the gospel with those like Joe. To calm our doubts and to encourage us to share the gospel with those on the brink of death, the Bible includes a story of a genuine deathbed conversion. The dying thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom, and Christ assured him that he would be with Him that very day in Paradise. The story has much to teach us not only about deathbed conversions, but about any conversion. One reason we struggle with deathbed conversions is that we erroneously cling to the notion that salvation is linked to human works. She was nice to everyone. She thought that all good people would go to heaven, no matter what they believe. If you asked Mary why God should let her into heaven when she died, she would tell you that she had tried her best to live a good life. She had never intentionally hurt anyone. She believed in God and went to church. According to the Bible, Mary, who had lived a good, religious life, would die and go to hell. Her husband Joe, who had lived a wicked, irreligious life, but who repented and believed in Christ on his deathbed, would die and go to heaven. We are still clinging to salvation by human works. Jesus illustrated this truth in a parable Matt. Later in the morning, he saw some other men standing idle in the marketplace, so he hired them and told them that he would pay them a fair wage. At noon and in mid-afternoon, he did the same thing. But the men who had worked all day grumbled because these men who had only worked one hour got the same wage that they received after working hard all day. I can do what I want with that which is my own. If God wants to dispense it to someone that we think unworthy, that is His business. No one has a valid claim against God. We have to get rid of the proud notion that salvation depends on even the least amount of human merit, effort, or good works. How much could this thief do to merit eternal life? He could not clean up his life! He had no future! He had made a complete mess of his life. If you have lived a good life, you are not an inch closer to heaven than the thief who has lived a wicked life. In fact, you may have more trouble trusting in Christ alone, because your good works fill you with pride and self-righteousness. That way, no one can boast. Salvation is always received through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. You may not have noticed, but both criminals asked Jesus to save them. He ignored the request of the first, but granted the request of the second. The first thief did not ask in repentance and faith; the second thief did. The first thief was angry, bitter, and railing against Jesus. He did not face up to his own sin. He let him die in his hardness of heart. The second thief was repentant, subdued, and trusting. Jesus graciously granted his request and assured him that he would be with Him in Paradise that day. The two radically different responses show us that not all that come into contact with Christ respond favorably. Some are hardened by the very same message that softens others. The natural man cannot understand the things of God

1 Cor. Thus God must graciously grant both repentance Acts Repentance involves admitting your own guilt and turning from your life of sin. Luke alone mentions the conversion of the one robber. It is inconceivable that a careful historian like Luke would have concocted this story to make a point, as liberals assert. Among those who hold to its veracity, some say that Matthew and Mark attribute to both robbers what was done only by one. I prefer the view that at first both robbers railed against Jesus. Perhaps the second robber was wrongly led along by the first, even as he had been in his earlier life of crime. He stopped joining the other thief in mocking Jesus. The more he heard the other thief continue his blasphemous taunts, the more it bothered him. He finally spoke out in defense of Jesus, admitting his own guilt He turned from his sin. A repentant person stops blaming God and others for his problems and admits his own guilt and sin. He admitted that he was getting what he deserved for his wrongdoing. Before, he could steal and shrug it off. One of the most difficult sins to repent of is the sin of trusting in your own good works. But to bring your own merit or good deeds is an affront to God, who gave His own Son as the necessary satisfaction for His wrath against sin. It detracts from His free grace to add your works to it, as if the death of Christ was not sufficient. I may not be perfect. I have my share of faults. He explains, Suppose that a firm in the East appointed an agent to represent them in the West, and that every month they forwarded to him his salary. But suppose also at the end of the year his employers discovered that though the agent had been cashing the checks they sent him, nevertheless, he had served another firm all that time. Would not that agent be a thief? Yet this is precisely the situation and state of every sinner. He has been sent into this world by God, and God has endowed him with talents and the capacity to use and improve them. God has blessed him with health and strength; He has supplied his every need, and provided innumerable opportunities to serve and glorify Him. But with what result? The very things God has given him have been mis-appropriated. The sinner has served another master, even Satan. He dissipates his strength and wastes his time in the pleasures of sin. He has robbed God. So every person, whether outwardly good or evil, must repent. But repentance is never alone. It is always the flip side of the coin with faith. True repentance is always bound up with saving faith. The words are often used interchangeably or in close connection in the Bible Mark 1: Faith involves casting yourself on Jesus Christ and His mercy.

Chapter 4 : Top 10 Fascinating Deathbed Confessions - Listverse

A penance is voluntary task or sacrifice. A penance is tightly connected with repentance and conversion that leads to behaviour and moral change. A penance is a lifetime effort to overcome the spirit over the body. There are several types of penance.

The assumptions underlying the Catholic conception of Penance. The admission by Pomerius of self-inflicted penance as an alternative was an important departure. Moral condition of southern Gaul terribly relaxed. Outward marks of those doing public penance Agde A. Terms of public penance. Public penance suited to capital sins. Priests not to bless penitents in church Agde. Thus in southern Gaul moral laxity and public penance co-exist. Result the general use of death-bed Penance. Caesarius urges penance in the lifetime. For capital offences public penance. With confession to the priest. This is to live worthily through the whole course of life. Caesarius does not look for public penance from young married men, or from those in military service. Public penitents might have taken a private course. The alternative of a bettered life is to be in its way Penance. It is to produce the fruits of penance in the reconciliation of the sinner. Pomerius had for such alternative penance contemplated a set term: Caesarius looks for it to cover the whole course of Life. Great importance of the admission of this alternative penance. Caesarius gives a careful pronouncement on death-bed penitence. The acute controversy on this subject in southern Gaul. There are three kinds of death-bed penitence: When a there are no capital offences, or b the capital offences have been washed out by good works. Penance at death is not needed for these: When the persons have deferred the Penance till death: When Penance is deferred till death, and even then restitution and forgiveness are not forthcoming. For this last class the priest may give Penance, but will be doubtful of the Divine forgiveness. The prevalent conviction that all do well to seek Penance at death. Caesarius desired that none should die "without the medicaments of Penance. Caesarius teaches that Penance may be accorded twice. An enumeration of alternative modes of penance. Indisposition of the Church to accord penance to young men. For cases of homicide canons of Ancyra to be observed. Communion is benedictio penitential. Those who receive penance in sickness must, if they recover, lead the life of penitents. Necessity of confession to a spiritual physician. Penance may be accorded twice. Repentance finds pardon, for it is the gift of God. Outward features of the public penance. The priest looses those whom the Lord has already forgiven. Yet Gregory speaks highly of the dignity of the commission; which, given to the Apostles, is now vested in the bishops. The Church rather with S. Leo, that in absolution the Lord acts with and through His ministers. Cases in which S. Three things required of the penitent: Confession without the fruits of penance is inadequate. Some confessions inadequately made. Grave sinners confess "with the priest standing solemnly in front of them in the presence of God. Three means of remission: Lent has only thirty-six fasting days. Exomologesis includes confession, penance, and amendment. His confession before a priest in early life. His connexion with Luxeuil. His Homilies preached in coma Domini. Public penance still in force. Public penitents are first excluded from communion, and then admitted to Penance. Outward features of public penance. Absolution given by the bishop on the coma Domini with the laying on of hands. Eligius, like Caesarius, recognises the Penance of a consistent life. All Christians such penitents. Danger of deferring Penance till death. Lent begins to be related to Penance. Distinction between public penitents and other persons present. Order ad penitentiam dandam. Order for those doing public penance. Ash Wednesday as the caput jejunii. Penitence conterminous with Lent. Some accompaniments of the public penance remain. The directions for the expulsion of penitents in the Pontificate Romanum are closely related to the canon just cited. The circumstances of public penance are substantially the same. The Liber Ordinum gives an alternative form of the Indulgentia. The Indulgentia has no distinction of penitents: Those who worthily take part in it may communicate on Easter Day. It registers the discipline in force in the British church in the sixth century. In this discipline penances are private without public counterparts in the Liturgy. And there is no solemn reconciliation by the bishop. The Prefatio is a monastic code, but covers all Church action for the graver sins of monks. Synod of Lucus Victoria A. The records of these synods are brief penitentials. They are primarily of monastic scope. Excerpta quasdam de Libro Davidis. These not mainly for

monks. No reference to penitential exercises in the Liturgy, or to solemn reconciliation by the bishop. What was the character of the confessions noticed? The mission of S. The lives of S. Finian show discrepancies and anachronisms. The Poenitentiale may be most fitly assigned to S. Clonard a monastery of the Irish type. It contains monks, clerks, students, penitents. The Irish communities combined the functions of a monastery with those of an university. Eminence of the Irish scholarship in the sixth century. The penitents of the Irish monasteries. Some are inmates of the monastery; others not. He had a sphere of influence, which included: Incomplete character of the Poenitentiale Vinniai. Some of the provisions of the penitentials of S. Columbanus are shown side by side.

Chapter 5 : Lesson On the Sacraments in General :: Catholic News Agency

A. Baptism and Penance are called Sacraments of the dead because they take away sin, which is the death of the soul, and give grace, which is its life. Q. May not the Sacrament of Penance be.

These have as their common centre the truth that he who sins must repent and as far as possible make reparation to Divine justice. The Virtue of Penance. The motive of this detestation is that sin offends God: On the other hand, the resolve to amend, while certainly necessary, is not sufficient of itself, i. Cast away from you all your transgressions. Joel, ii, 12; Jer. In the same spirit St. John the Baptist exhorts his hearers: Such too is the teaching of Christ as expressed in the parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Publican; while the Magdalen who "washed out her sins with her tears" of sorrow, has been for all ages the type of the repentant sinner. Theologians, following the doctrine of St. Some have classed it with the virtue of charity, others with the virtue of religion, others again as a part of justice. Cajetan seems to have considered it as belonging to all three; but most theologians agree with St. The detestation of sin is a praiseworthy act, and in penance this detestation proceeds from a special motive, i. Necessityâ€”The Council of Trent expressly declares Sess. Theologians have questioned whether this necessity obtains in virtue of the positive command of God or independently of such positive precept. The weight of authority is in favour of the latter opinion; moreover, theologians state that in the present order of Divine Providence God Himself cannot forgive sins, if there be no real repentance St. In the Old Law Ezech. In the Christian Dispensation this act of repentance has been subjected by Christ to the judgment and jurisdiction of His Church, whensoever there is question of sin committed after the reception of Baptism Council of Trent, sess. The Sacrament of Penance. It is called a "sacrament" not simply a function or ceremony, because it is an outward sign instituted by Christ to impart grace to the soul. As an outward sign it comprises the actions of the penitent in presenting himself to the priest and accusing himself of his sins, and the actions of the priest in pronouncing absolution and imposing satisfaction. This whole procedure is usually called, from one of its parts, "confession", and it is said to take place in the "tribunal of penance", because it is a judicial process in which the penitent is at once the accuser, the person accused, and the witness, while the priest pronounces judgment and sentence. The grace conferred is deliverance from the guilt of sin and, in the case of mortal sin, from its eternal punishment; hence also reconciliation with God, justification. By way of further explanation it is needful to correct certain erroneous views regarding this sacrament which not only misrepresent the actual practice of the Church but also lead to a false interpretation of theological statement and historical evidence. From what has been said it should be clear: Man indeed is free to obey or disobey, but once he has sinned, he must seek pardon not on conditions of his own choosing but on those which God has determined, and these for the Christian are embodied in the Sacrament of Penance. This power belongs to God alone; but He can and does exercise it through the ministration of men. Since He has seen fit to exercise it by means of this sacrament, it cannot be said that the Church or the priest interferes between the soul and God; on the contrary, penance is the removal of the one obstacle that keeps the soul away from God. Without sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment, confession avails nothing, the pronouncement of absolution is of no effect, and the guilt of the sinner is greater than before. In paying ordinary debts, as e. But this view, in the first place, overlooks the fact that Christ, though merciful, is also just and exacting. Both these accusations, of too great leniency and too great severity, proceed as a rule from those who have no experience with the sacrament and only the vaguest ideas of what the Church teaches or of the power to forgive sins which the Church received from Christ. Teaching of the Church. As a means of regaining grace and justice, penance was at all times necessary for those who had defiled their souls with any mortal sin. Before the coming of Christ, penance was not a sacrament, nor is it since His coming a sacrament for those who are not baptized. But the Lord then principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance, when, being raised from the dead, he breathed upon His disciples saying: By which action so signal and words so clear the consent of all the Fathers has ever understood that the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and to their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after Baptism. Why doth this man speak thus? Who can forgive sins but God only? Thy sins are

forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house" Mark, ii, ; Matt. Christ wrought a miracle to show that He had power to forgive sins and that this power could be exerted not only in heaven but also on earth. This power, moreover, He transmitted to Peter and the other Apostles. To Peter He says: And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: Later He says to all the Apostles: As to the meaning of these texts, it should be noted: In healing the palsied man Christ declared that "the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins"; here He promises that what these men, the Apostles, bind or loose on earth, God in heaven will likewise bind or loose. But as the Council of Trent declares, Christ principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance after His Resurrection, a miracle greater than that of healing the sick. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. While the sense of these words is quite obvious, the following points are to be considered: Christ here reiterates in the plainest terms "sins", "forgive", "retain" what He had previously stated in figurative language, "bind" and "loose", so that this text specifies and distinctly applies to sin the power of loosing and binding. He prefaces this grant of power by declaring that the mission of the Apostles is similar to that which He had received from the Father and which He had fulfilled: Now it is beyond doubt that He came into the world to destroy sin and that on various occasions He explicitly forgave sin Matt. Christ not only declared that sins were forgiven, but really and actually forgave them; hence, the Apostles are empowered not merely to announce to the sinner that his sins are forgiven but to grant him forgiveness-"whose sins you shall forgive". If their power were limited to the declaration "God pardons you", they would need a special revelation in each case to make the declaration valid. The power is twofold "to forgive or to retain, i. The exercise of this power in either form forgiving or retaining is not restricted: Christ simply says "whose sins". It is therefore clear from the words of Christ that the Apostles had power to forgive sins. But this was not a personal prerogative that was to erase at their death; it was granted to them in their official capacity and hence as a permanent institution in the Church no less permanent than the mission to teach and baptize all nations. Christ foresaw that even those who received faith and baptism, whether during the lifetime of the Apostles or later, would fall into sin and therefore would need forgiveness in order to be saved. He must, then, have intended that the power to forgive should be transmitted from the Apostles to their successors and be used as long as there would be sinners in the Church, and that means to the end of time. It is true that in baptism also sins are forgiven, but this does not warrant the view that the power to forgive is simply the power to baptize. In the first place, as appears from the texts cited above, the power to forgive is also the power to retain; its exercise involves a judicial action. But no such action is implied in the commission to baptize Matt. Furthermore, baptism, because it is a new birth, cannot be repeated, whereas the power to forgive sins penance is to be used as often as the sinner may need it. Hence the condemnation, by the same Council, of any one "who, confounding the sacraments, should say that baptism itself is the Sacrament of Penance, as though these two sacraments were not distinct and as though penance were not rightly called the second plank after shipwreck" Sess. These pronouncements were directed against the Protestant teaching which held that penance was merely a sort of repeated baptism; and as baptism effected no real forgiveness of sin but only an external covering over of sin through faith alone, the same, it was alleged, must be the case with penance. This, then, as a sacrament is superfluous; absolution is only a declaration that sin is forgiven through faith, and satisfaction is needless because Christ has satisfied once for all men. This was the first sweeping and radical denial of the Sacrament of Penance. Some of the earlier sects had claimed that only priests in the state of grace could validly absolve, but they had not denied the existence of the power to forgive. During all the preceding centuries, Catholic belief in this power had been so clear and strong that in order to set it aside Protestantism was obliged to strike at the very constitution of the Church and reject the whole content of Tradition. Belief and Practice of the Early Church. Moreover, even after penance came to be recognized as an institution of the Church, it was not called by the name of sacrament, because it was regarded as an odious sacrament. It is therefore Catholic doctrine that the Church from the earliest times believed in the power to forgive sins as granted by Christ to the Apostles. Such a belief in fact was clearly inculcated by the words with which Christ granted the power, and it would have been inexplicable to the early Christians if any

one who professed faith in Christ had questioned the existence of that power in the Church. But if, contrariwise, we suppose that no such belief existed from the beginning, we encounter a still greater difficulty: But no such record is found; even those who sought to limit the power itself presupposed its existence, and their very attempt at limitation put them in opposition to the prevalent Catholic belief. Turning now to evidence of a positive sort, we have to note that the statements of any Father or orthodox ecclesiastical writer regarding penance present not merely his own personal view, but the commonly accepted belief; and furthermore that the belief which they record was no novelty at the time, but was the traditional doctrine handed down by the regular teaching of the Church and embodied in her practice. In other words, each witness speaks for a past that reaches back to the beginning, even when he does not expressly appeal to tradition. Greater wrong could not be done than what they do in seeking to rescind His commands and fling back the office He bestowed. The Church obeys Him in both respects, by binding sin and by loosing it; for the Lord willed that for both the power should be equal" De poenit. Again he teaches that this power was to be a function of the priesthood. The power to forgive extends to all sins: Against the same heretics St. Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona d. I ad Sympron, 6 in P. In the East during the same period we have the testimony of St. Cyril of Alexandria d. Wherefore, he concludes, "it were manifest folly to condemn so great a power without which we can neither obtain heaven nor come to the fulfillment of the promises. Not only when they the priests regenerate us baptism , but also after our new birth, they can forgive us our sins" De sacred. These extracts show that the Fathers recognized in penance a power and a utility quite distinct from that of baptism. Repeatedly they compare in figurative language the two means of obtaining pardon; or regarding baptism as spiritual birth, they describe penance as the remedy for the ills of the soul contracted after that birth. But a more important fact is that both in the West and in the East, the Fathers constantly appeal to the words of Christ and given them the same interpretation that was given eleven centuries later by the Council of Trent. In this respect they simply echoed the teachings of the earlier Fathers who had defended Catholic doctrine against the heretics of the third and second centuries. Cyprian in his "De lapsis" A.

Chapter 6 : Prayers for Death and Dying

Clearly illicit is "scheduling" a situation where general absolution is necessary. Furthermore, only the bishop, not an individual priest, can decide upon the use of general absolution outside of danger of death.

In a profound sense it is also a "confession" - acknowledgment and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism¹⁷ that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life. 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. It is the movement of a "contrite heart," drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* affliction of spirit and *compunctio cordis* repentance of heart. God must give man a new heart. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced: But this same Spirit who brings sin to light is also the Consoler who gives the human heart grace for repentance and conversion. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving,³¹ 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 obtaining forgiveness of sins: 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. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life - pure worthy, and joyful - of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God. The sacrament of forgiveness Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" which concerned only certain grave sins, one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day. It comprises two equally essential elements: The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion. He effects the reconciliation of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church: God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God 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. Contrition is "sorrow of

the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again. Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible. Such a stirring of conscience can initiate an interior process which, under the prompting of grace, will be brought to completion by sacramental absolution. By itself however, imperfect contrition cannot obtain the forgiveness of grave sins, but it disposes one to obtain forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance. The passages best suited to this can be found in the Ten Commandments, the moral catechesis of the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic teachings. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible. But those who fail to do so and knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest, "for if the sick person is too ashamed to show his wound to the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not know. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made. When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm done. Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. This satisfaction is also called "penance. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, "provided we suffer with him. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with the cooperation of "him who strengthens" us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Since ancient times the bishop, visible head of a particular Church, has thus rightfully been considered to be the one who principally has the power and ministry of reconciliation: In danger of death any priest, even if deprived of faculties for hearing confessions, can absolve from every sin and excommunication. The minister of this sacrament should unite himself to the intention and charity of Christ. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation "is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation. Sin damages or even breaks fraternal communion. The sacrament of Penance repairs or restores it. In this sense it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion, but has also a revitalizing effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his innermost truth. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way offended and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation. For it is now, in this life, that we are offered the choice between life and death, and it is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom, from which one is excluded by grave sin. What is an indulgence? Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the "eternal punishment" of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the "temporal punishment" of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the "old man" and to put on the "new man. Thus

recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission in the unity of the Mystical Body. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity. The elements of the celebration are ordinarily these: Here, the personal confession of sins and individual absolution are inserted into a liturgy of the word of God with readings and a homily, an examination of conscience conducted in common, a communal request for forgiveness, the Our Father and a thanksgiving in common. This communal celebration expresses more clearly the ecclesial character of penance. However, regardless of its manner of celebration the sacrament of Penance is always, by its very nature, a liturgical action, and therefore an ecclesial and public action. Grave necessity can also exist when, given the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors to hear individual confessions properly in a reasonable time, so that the penitents through no fault of their own would be deprived of sacramental grace or Holy Communion for a long time. In this case, for the absolution to be valid the faithful must have the intention of individually confessing their grave sins in the time required. Christ is at work in each of the sacraments. He personally addresses every sinner: Personal confession is thus the form most expressive of reconciliation with God and with the Church. One must ask for this precious gift for oneself and for others. If repentance arises from love of charity for God, it is called "perfect" contrition; if it is founded on other motives, it is called "imperfect. The confession of venial faults, without being necessary in itself, is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.

Chapter 7 : Confession and General Absolution - Canon Law Made Easy

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (commonly called Penance, Reconciliation, or Confession) is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church (called sacred mysteries in the Eastern Catholic Churches), in which the faithful obtain absolution for the sins committed against God and neighbour and are reconciled with the community of the Church.

This list has been prepared in order to try to respond to the most common of them. Please do not hesitate to bring those questions to the priests in your parish or to seek solutions in the many excellent resources on the Internet. It is our hope that those who have questions about the Sacrament of Penance may find this FAQ useful in helping to overcome whatever hesitations they may have in coming to receive the sacrament. It is also hoped that Catholics who frequently receive this sacrament may find this list a means for greater appreciation of what they already esteem. Click on each question to see the answers. Click again to hide them.

Why do I have to confess my sins to a priest? He told his apostles that just as God the Father had sent him "and God the Father sent him to save us from our sins" so he was sending them. He told them that whatever sins they forgive are forgiven and whatever sins they retain are retained. In Since the apostles were unable to read minds, the only way that they would know which to forgive and which to retain is if people told them their sins. Jesus thus established the essential structure of the sacrament of confession. Just as he uses priests to give us his Body and Blood at Mass so he uses them to give us His mercy in Penance. Was the Sacrament of Penance always the way it is now? During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. Why do people vary in calling it the Sacrament of Penance, Confession or Reconciliation? The names emphasize different aspects of the sacrament. Confession refers to the act by which we tell our sins to the priest. Reconciliation refers to the goal of the celebration by which the sinner is reconciled to God and the Church see CCC The ritual for the sacrament is called the Rite of Penance, but is fitting to refer to it with any of these titles. The sacrament consists of three actions on the part of the penitent: It is also important to examine for sins of omission. How do I grow in contrition? There are two types of contrition: We should ask God to help us achieve that perfect contrition in which we are sorry for having wounded the God who loves us and whom we should love in return. How does our sorrow translate into penance? When we are truly sorry for our sins, we regret having ever done them. That leads naturally to our trying to remedy the damage caused by sin and to having a firm purpose of amendment to avoid that and other types of sins in the future. A good confession is humble, sincere and complete. What is sin and what sins need to be confessed in the Sacrament of Penance? The Church says that all grave or mortal sins must be confessed as soon as possible CIC What is a mortal sin? A mortal sin involves an action whose object is grave matter that is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent. Grave matter is generally understood to be something that violates the Ten Commandments. Deliberate consent means a consent sufficiently intentional to be a personal choice CCC What are the consequences of a mortal sin? This is why it is so important for mortal sins to be confessed to a priest as soon as possible. What is a venial sin and what are its consequences? Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. However venial sin does not set us in direct opposition to the will and friendship of God; it does not break the covenant with God. What did Jesus say and do about sin? Jesus is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. In 1: He healed the sins of the paralyzed man and of the woman caught in adultery Mk 2: He taught us how to be brutal toward sin, instructing us in the Sermon on the Mount that it would be better to rip out our eyes or cut off our hands if they were leading us to sin than to do nothing and lose our bodies and souls forever in Hell Mt 5: He taught us to pray to the Father to forgive us our sins and to bring us to forgive the relatively smaller

debts of those who sin against us Mt 6: Confession of our venial sins shows our hatred of all sin because even venial sins are against the love of God and neighbor. No, you should stay at home and wait for your canonization papers to arrive! If I forget to confess a mortal sin, is my confession still valid and my sins forgiven? The person should, however, mention that forgotten sin in the next confession to receive advice and a proper penance. If this is a routine occurrence, it is probably an indication that one is either confessing too infrequently or not fully aware of the true horror that is a mortal sin, because one should not forget mortal sins easily. How often do I need to confess? The Church recommends that Catholics receive the Sacrament of Penance frequently. What are the effects of the sacrament? The Sacrament of Penance is a spiritual resurrection bringing us to life again after we were dead through mortal sin Lk It reconciles us with God in loving friendship and restores us to his grace. It is normally followed by peace, joy, serenity and spiritual consolation. The sacrament also reconciles us with the Church, repairing or restoring the damage our sins have done to our communion with others. The sinner also auspiciously anticipates the judgment that will come at the end of his life, choosing the path of life over the path of death CCC Can a priest reveal what he has heard to others? A priest can never reveal the sins a person has confessed. If a priest were to violate the seal of confession he would be automatically excommunicated CIC Over the centuries several priests have died and many have been imprisoned because they refused, even under threat of torture and execution, to break the inviolable seal of confession. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of the sacrament and of the priesthood: What if I feel nervous about going to the sacrament? Remember, first, that in the sacrament you are fundamentally talking to God through the priest. Moreover, know that you will not say anything that the priest has not heard before. Do not be afraid. How do I prepare? What do I say? Second, try to prepare with the help of a good examination of conscience sheet, but the priest will know that you cannot remember your sins with the precision of someone who came the previous week. Third, get the largest sins off of your shoulders first. Confession is not meant to be a memory test. It is good when Catholics have memorized one of the many beautiful acts of contrition, which sum up all of the sentiments and resolutions a Catholic should have in coming to confession. Most churches have traditional confessionals or reconciliation rooms with the option to confess either face-to-face or kneeling behind an opaque screen. In Church law, both the priest and the penitent have the right to opt for the screen if for whatever reason they find that more comfortable. What if I prefer to go to confession to priests at nearby parishes or at Catholic shrines or chapels where confessions are available each day? The most important thing is that you go! You can go to any Catholic priest in good standing with the faculties to hear confessions. You may find over time, however, that you will be helped more in your struggle against sin by a good confessor who has gotten to know you than by confessing to various priests, none of whom really know you. Can I confess my sins over the telephone or via the internet? You can confess your sins in any number of ways “ many have confessed to bartenders and hairdressers over the centuries “ but you cannot receive sacramental absolution via the internet or on the phone. Can I be forgiven of the terrible sin of abortion? The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong, but do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If you would prefer to confess to a priest who has experience ministering to women who have abortions, please contact Project Rachel Priests must be given faculties explicitly by their bishop to absolve the sin of abortion. The Project Rachel website contains testimonials from dozens of women who have found reconciliation and healing through Project Rachel and some very moving comments about the Sacrament. Project Rachel also offers an extensive retreat program, including retreats during Lent. Do I have to go to Confession before receiving Holy Communion like everyone did years ago when I was a child? The same principal applies to all of us. If one has not committed any serious sins since his or her last good confession, then it is not necessary to confess before receiving the Holy Eucharist. If you are civilly divorced but have not remarried or were validly married in the Church after receiving a declaration of nullity for your first marriage, then, yes, you may receive the Sacrament. If you have remarried outside of the Church or have entered into a cohabitating relationship, then those predicaments must be addressed before you can receive

absolution. Pope John Paul II addressed this situation in

Chapter 8 : Death Penalty: Catholic Q & A

Full text of "A History Of Penance, Being A Study Of Authorities, Volume 2: The Western Church From A.D. To A.D. "
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It is called a "sacrament" not simply a function or ceremony , because it is an outward sign instituted by Christ to impart grace to the soul. As an outward sign it comprises the actions of the penitent in presenting himself to the priest and accusing himself of his sins , and the actions of the priest in pronouncing absolution and imposing satisfaction. This whole procedure is usually called, from one of its parts, "confession", and it is said to take place in the "tribunal of penance", because it is a judicial process in which the penitent is at once the accuser, the person accused, and the witness , while the priest pronounces judgment and sentence. The grace conferred is deliverance from the guilt of sin and, in the case of mortal sin , from its eternal punishment ; hence also reconciliation with God , justification. By way of further explanation it is needful to correct certain erroneous views regarding this sacrament which not only misrepresent the actual practice of the Church but also lead to a false interpretation of theological statement and historical evidence. From what has been said it should be clear: Man indeed is free to obey or disobey , but once he has sinned , he must seek pardon not on conditions of his own choosing but on those which God has determined, and these for the Christian are embodied in the Sacrament of Penance. No Catholic believes that a priest , simply as an individual man , however pious or learned, has power to forgive sins. This power belongs to God alone; but He can and does exercise it through the ministration of men. Since He has seen fit to exercise it by means of this sacrament , it cannot be said that the Church or the priest interferes between the soul and God ; on the contrary, penance is the removal of the one obstacle that keeps the soul away from God. Without sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment, confession avails nothing, the pronouncement of absolution is of no effect, and the guilt of the sinner is greater than before. While this sacrament as a dispensation of Divine mercy facilitates the pardoning of sin , it by no means renders sin less hateful or its consequences less dreadful to the Christian mind ; much less does it imply permission to commit sin in the future. In paying ordinary debts , as e. Strangely enough, the opposite charge is often heard, viz. But this view, in the first place, overlooks the fact that Christ , though merciful, is also just and exacting. Both these accusations, of too great leniency and too great severity, proceed as a rule from those who have no experience with the sacrament and only the vaguest ideas of what the Church teaches or of the power to forgive sins which the Church received from Christ. Teaching of the Church The Council of Trent declares: As a means of regaining grace and justice , penance was at all times necessary for those who had defiled their souls with any mortal sin. Before the coming of Christ , penance was not a sacrament , nor is it since His coming a sacrament for those who are not baptized. But the Lord then principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance, when, being raised from the dead, he breathed upon His disciples saying: By which action so signal and words so clear the consent of all the Fathers has ever understood that the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and to their lawful successors , for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after Baptism. Why doth this man speak thus? Who can forgive sins but God only? Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins , he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house" Mark 2: Christ wrought a miracle to show that He had power to forgive sins and that this power could be exerted not only in heaven but also on earth. This power, moreover, He transmitted to Peter and the other Apostles. To Peter He says: And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: Later He says to all the Apostles: As to the meaning of these texts, it should be noted: In healing the palsied man Christ declared that "the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins " ; here He promises that what these men, the Apostles , bind or loose on earth, God in heaven will likewise bind or loose. But as the Council of Trent declares, Christ principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance after His Resurrection , a miracle greater than that of healing the sick. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. While the sense of these words is quite obvious, the following points are to be considered: He prefaces this grant of power by

declaring that the mission of the Apostles is similar to that which He had received from the Father and which He had fulfilled: Now it is beyond doubt that He came into the world to destroy sin and that on various occasions He explicitly forgave sin Matthew 9: Christ not only declared that sins were forgiven, but really and actually forgave them; hence, the Apostles are empowered not merely to announce to the sinner that his sins are forgiven but to grant him forgiveness "whose sins you shall forgive". If their power were limited to the declaration "God pardons you", they would need a special revelation in each case to make the declaration valid. The exercise of this power in either form forgiving or retaining is not restricted: Christ simply says "whose sins ". It is therefore clear from the words of Christ that the Apostles had power to forgive sins. Christ foresaw that even those who received faith and baptism, whether during the lifetime of the Apostles or later, would fall into sin and therefore would need forgiveness in order to be saved. He must, then, have intended that the power to forgive should be transmitted from the Apostles to their successors and be used as long as there would be sinners in the Church, and that means to the end of time. It is true that in baptism also sins are forgiven, but this does not warrant the view that the power to forgive is simply the power to baptize. In the first place, as appears from the texts cited above, the power to forgive is also the power to retain; its exercise involves a judicial action. But no such action is implied in the commission to baptize Matthew Furthermore, baptism, because it is a new birth, cannot be repeated, whereas the power to forgive sins penance is to be used as often as the sinner may need it. Hence the condemnation, by the same Council, of any one "who, confounding the sacraments, should say that baptism itself is the Sacrament of Penance, as though these two sacraments were not distinct and as though penance were not rightly called the second plank after shipwreck" Sess. These pronouncements were directed against the Protestant teaching which held that penance was merely a sort of repeated baptism; and as baptism effected no real forgiveness of sin but only an external covering over of sin through faith alone, the same, it was alleged, must be the case with penance. This, then, as a sacrament is superfluous; absolution is only a declaration that sin is forgiven through faith, and satisfaction is needless because Christ has satisfied once for all men. This was the first sweeping and radical denial of the Sacrament of Penance. Some of the earlier sects had claimed that only priests in the state of grace could validly absolve, but they had not denied the existence of the power to forgive. During all the preceding centuries, Catholic belief in this power had been so clear and strong that in order to set it aside Protestantism was obliged to strike at the very constitution of the Church and reject the whole content of Tradition. Belief and practice of the early Church Among the modernistic propositions condemned by Pius X in the Decree "Lamentabili sane" 3 July, are the following: Moreover, even after penance came to be recognized as an institution of the Church, it was not called by the name of sacrament, because it was regarded as an odious sacrament. It is therefore Catholic doctrine that the Church from the earliest times believed in the power to forgive sins as granted by Christ to the Apostles. Such a belief in fact was clearly inculcated by the words with which Christ granted the power, and it would have been inexplicable to the early Christians if any one who professed faith in Christ had questioned the existence of that power in the Church. But if, contrariwise, we suppose that no such belief existed from the beginning, we encounter a still greater difficulty: But no such record is found; even those who sought to limit the power itself presupposed its existence, and their very attempt at limitation put them in opposition to the prevalent Catholic belief. Turning now to evidence of a positive sort, we have to note that the statements of any Father or orthodox ecclesiastical writer regarding penance present not merely his own personal view, but the commonly accepted belief; and furthermore that the belief which they record was no novelty at the time, but was the traditional doctrine handed down by the regular teaching of the Church and embodied in her practice. In other words, each witness speaks for a past that reaches back to the beginning, even when he does not expressly appeal to tradition. Greater wrong could not be done than what they do in seeking to rescind His commands and fling back the office He bestowed. The Church obeys Him in both respects, by binding sin and by loosing it; for the Lord willed that for both the power should be equal" On Penance I. Again he teaches that this power was to be a function of the priesthood. The power to forgive extends to all sins: Against the same heretics St. Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona d. In the East during the same period we have the testimony of St. Cyril of Alexandria d. Wherefore, he concludes, "it were manifest folly to condemn so great a power without which we can neither obtain heaven nor come to the

fulfillment of the promises. Not only when they the priests regenerate us baptism , but also after our new birth, they can forgive us our sins " On the Priesthood III. These extracts show that the Fathers recognized in penance a power and a utility quite distinct from that of baptism. Repeatedly they compare in figurative language the two means of obtaining pardon; or regarding baptism as spiritual birth, they describe penance as the remedy for the ills of the soul contracted after that birth. But a more important fact is that both in the West and in the East, the Fathers constantly appeal to the words of Christ and given them the same interpretation that was given eleven centuries later by the Council of Trent. In this respect they simply echoed the teachings of the earlier Fathers who had defended Catholic doctrine against the heretics of the third and second centuries. Cyprian in his "De lapsis" A. The heretic Novatian , on the contrary, asserted that "it is unlawful to admit apostates to the communion of the Church ; their forgiveness must be left with God who alone can grant it" Socrates , Church History V. The distinction between sins that could be forgiven and others that could not, originated in the latter half of the second century as the doctrine of the Montanists , and especially of Tertullian. While still a Catholic , Tertullian wrote A. For these, however, he allows only one forgiveness: In the vestibule He has stationed a second repentance for opening to such as knock; but now once for all, because now for the second time; but never more, because the last time it had been in vain. However, if any do incur the debt of a second repentance, his spirit is not to be forthwith cut down and undermined by despair. Let it be irksome to sin again, but let it not be irksome to repent again; let it be irksome to imperil oneself again, but let no one be ashamed to be set free again. Repeated sickness must have repeated medicine" On Penance 7. Tertullian does not deny that the Church can forgive sins ; he warns sinners against relapse, yet exhorts them to repent in case they should fall. His attitude at the time was not surprising, since in the early days the sins above mentioned were severely dealt with; this was done for disciplinary reasons, not because the Church lacked power to forgive. In the minds , however, of some people the idea was developing that not only the exercise of the power but the power itself was limited. Against this false notion Pope Callistus published his "peremptory edict" in which he declares: In this work he rejects without scruple what he had taught as a Catholic: In place of it he sets up the distinction between lighter sins which the bishop could forgive and more grievous sins which God alone could forgive. Though in an earlier treatise, "Scorpiace" chapter 10 , he had said that "the Lord left here to Peter and through him to the Church the keys of heaven" he now denies that the power granted to Peter had been transmitted to the Church , i. Yet he claims this power for the "spirituals" pneumatici , although these, for prudential reasons, do not make use of it. To the arguments of the "Psychici", as he termed the Catholics , he replies: This I, even more than you, acknowledge and adjudge. I who in the new prophets have the Paraclete saying: Thus Tertullian , by the accusation which he makes against the pope and by the restriction which he places upon the exercise of the power of forgiving sin , bears witness to the existence of that power in the Church which he had abandoned.

Chapter 9 : THE ROMAN CATECHISM: The Sacraments -- Penance

More on the use of public penance in the shall be given at the last along with penance, that these men, if only in the supreme moment of death, may, with the permission of Our Saviour, be.

I will go through each of these in detail below. Examination of Conscience Before we get to the church, we mentally review our sins and determine what needs to be confessed. A detailed way of doing this is provided in the " What to Confess: A Catholic is required to go to Confession once a year during Lent and also at any time of the year he has mortal sin on his soul is "not in a state of grace" , especially if he desires to receive the Eucharist. But weekly -- at least monthly -- Confessions are encouraged. You can also call your priest to set up an appointment for the Sacrament for "just reason" only, you have the option of receiving the Sacrament face to face, outside of the Confessional, but this is not standard and should not be treated as though it is. Some fail to follow the proper form so as to render your Confession invalid! The solution to these problems is: It is effected by Christ, Who paid their eternal wages with His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, through His priests using proper form, which are the words "ego te absolvo" or "I absolve you" in English. Through the Sacrament, Christ gives us not only forgiveness, but grace to remain steadfast. What Penance is not: While the priest may give you some direction and advice in the Confessional, if you have general problems or spiritual issues you want to discuss, you should set an appointment to talk with him. This is especially true at a Confession before Mass where people are in line behind you and time is short. Be sorry, be brief, be gone. In other words, contrition is rooted in the will, not in the emotions. For example, some people are more emotional than others: The one is not necessarily more "holy" or making a better Confession than the other. What matters is their conviction -- their will to offend God no more, and their resolution to make reparations as far as possible, do their penance, and patiently bear the temporal effects of their sins. Without contrition, Confession is not valid. We must always strive for the latter, which always absolves sin in itself if it is coupled with the will to also receive the Sacrament. If this is your will, if this is your desire, if you are willing to confess all of your sins and do your penance and resolve to sin no more, then your sins will be forgiven -- all of them, even those you may have truly forgotten about. Confessing Your Sins to God through His priests When you get to the church at the time the Sacrament is offered, you may or may not find a line of people standing or lined up in a pew outside the Confessional. Just take your place in line, keeping a wide berth of the Confessional itself if it is occupied by a fellow penitent. Please note that it is very rude to be near the Confessional when someone else is using it! If this were to happen, the one who overhears should take all steps to not hear, and should never, ever repeat anything he might have heard. Some confessionals have a green light shining when a priest is ready and available in the Confessional, and a red light shining when someone is in the Confessional with him, receiving the Sacrament. You may barely see the priest on the other side of the grille the screen which separates you. When you are ready to begin, make the Sign of the Cross and say, in a whisper, but loud enough so he can hear you: Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It is X days, weeks, months, years since my last Confession. I accuse myself of the following sins. For example, telling him about stealing a loaf of bread because you were starving will elicit a different penance and spiritual direction than if you tell him you stole a stack of money because you wanted to buy some porn. If you are unsure as to whether a particular act was a sin, tell him. As you speak, he may stop you to ask you questions for clarification. When you are finished, indicate so by saying something like the following traditional words: For these and all the sins of my past life, I ask pardon of God, penance, and absolution from you, Father. See the page on Catholic Moral Theology for more information. Penance Now the priest will give you penance to help you pay for the temporal effects of your sins. He might ask you to say certain prayers the old "Say three Hail Marys " , he may ask you to read certain parts of Scripture. If there is restitution to be made, he might ask you to do so. Whatever he asks you to do, accomplish it as soon as possible after leaving the Confessional. Act of Contrition Now you will make an Act of Contrition to express your sorrow at having offended God and resolving to sin no more. The traditional way of doing this is to recite aloud the prayer called "Act of Contrition": O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most

of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and avoid the near occasions of sin. If you are comfortable doing so, you may say the prayer in Latin: Deus meus, ex toto corde poenitet me omnium meorum peccatorum, eaque detestor, quia peccando, non solum poenas a Te iuste statutas promeritus sum, sed praesertim quia offendi Te, summum bonum, ac dignum qui super omnia diligaris. Ideo firmiter propono, adiuvante gratia Tua, de cetero me non peccatorum peccandique occasiones proximas fugiturum. If you have a hard time memorizing which is OK! You can also have the prayer written out or on a Holy Card to carry with you in the Confessional. Christ, through His priest, grants you absolution in a form that includes the words below. Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat; et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo ab omni vinculo excommunicationis suspensionis et interdicti in quantum possum et tu indiges. May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you; and by His authority I absolve you from every bond of excommunication and interdict, so far as my power allows and your needs require. He will pray a prayer for you: Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi, merita Beatae Mariae Virginis et omnium sanctorum, quidquid boni feceris vel malum sustinueris sint tibi in remissionem peccatorum, augmentum gratiae et praemium vitae aeternae. May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints obtain for you that whatever good you do or whatever evil you bear might merit for you the remission of your sins, the increase of grace and the reward of everlasting life. The Sacrament is now complete. The priest will dismiss you, perhaps with a final blessing. Thank him, cross yourself, and leave the Confessional. If it is before Mass and people were in line behind you, it is kind to give the priest an idea as to how many people are awaiting Confession. Carrying out your Penance As soon as possible, carry out the penance you were given. You may add penances of your own devising to the ones the priest gave you. In other words, if the priest were to tell you to pray three Hail Marys, and you miscount and pray only two, and realize your mistake later, you are still forgiven. Go ahead and pray the third Hail Mary and get on with your life. Read a " sample confession " so you can see how easily it all goes After Confession Rejoice and be grateful! Consider what has been done for you! Savor the sweet knowledge that you are forgiven. He has said the word, and you have been healed! Now you must imitate Christ by forgiving others as you have been forgiven: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences. Consider the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him, that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow servants that owed him an hundred pence: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow servant falling down, besought him, saying: And he would not: Now his fellow servants seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him; and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts. Think of those against whom you hold grudges. Consider vengeful feelings you might have, or any petty ways you strike back at or undermine others.