

# SACRAMENT OF PENANCE – Rites of Reconciliation

*Gratefully acknowledging Liturgy Brisbane resources.*

## OUR TRADITION – Reconciliation is more than just Confession

Reconciliation is officially called the Sacrament of Penance. In the past, it was also called 'Confession'. These titles are all aspects of the meaning of the sacrament.

The Sacrament of Penance is a **celebration** of God's love and mercy. It celebrates the call to repentance after a process of **conversion** of heart. This includes **confessing** our sin and receiving the **forgiveness** of God through the ministry of the church: with the priest as its minister. Through this process, a person is reconciled with the church community and continues to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Baptised members of the Roman Catholic Church who feel called to be reconciled with God and with the faith community can take part in the Sacrament of Penance. This call to conversion and reconciliation occurs when one considers, judges and changes one's life in the light of God's love revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Prayer and participating in the Eucharist are the **regular** means of asking for forgiveness and being reconciled with God and the community. However, there are times when people need the Sacrament of Penance / Reconciliation in their struggle to be forgiven and forgiving, to discover anew the gift of God's saving action in their lives and to be strengthened to continue living as disciples of Jesus.

## HOW WE CELEBRATE RECONCILIATION

There are three (3) forms (Rites) of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

### Reconciliation for Individual Penitents (Rite 1)

This form is celebrated by an individual person in the presence of the priest. The place where this happens is usually a Reconciliation Room (what used to be called a 'Confessional') or another suitable place. Some church communities now prefer to celebrate this form in a more public place.

The rite begins with a greeting, followed by words of encouragement from the priest. After a short reading from scripture, the person reflects on their circumstances and confesses their sin and seeks reconciliation. The priest offers advice and gives a penance that is meant to help in starting a new life and to remedy any weakness. The priest pronounces absolution and the rite concludes with a short thanksgiving.

### Reconciliation for Several Penitents with individual confession and absolution (Rite 2).

This form begins with a celebration of the Word – readings from scripture, hymns, prayers, a homily and an examination of conscience, followed by a call to repentance.

Private confession and reconciliation follow. The rite concludes with a short thanksgiving, and a blessing and dismissal of the gathered assembly.

**Reconciliation for Several Penitents with general confession and absolution (Rite 3)**

This form follows the same pattern as Rite II, but does not include individual confession and reconciliation. It includes a communal prayer of confession and general absolution. The use of this form is restricted to emergencies and other special circumstances.

***IMPORTANT NOTE***

Parishes differ in the times and opportunities they offer for Reconciliation.

Most parishes offer an opportunity for Reconciliation for Several Penitents with individual confession and absolution (Rite 2) during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Not all parishes offer Reconciliation for Individual Penitents (Rite 1) at specified times each week, but do make it available anytime through an appointment that suits the penitent and priest.

**Always call the parish first, to make sure what is offered.**