The Rite of Penance: A Sharing of Pastoral Wisdom
This bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community's life of worship and prayer.

Editorial commentary in the bulletin is the responsibility of the editor.

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A March 2, 2001 "Updated Explanatory Note on the Revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal" has been posted by the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy on the Website of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops www.cccb.ca <http://www.cccb.ca>.
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As promised, this issue is a sequel to Bulletin #164 on the Rite of Penance. While Bulletin #164 dealt with the text of the rite, #165 deals with the task of using the ritual text. These articles are written out of a meeting of study and experience, and rely on the wisdom gained from that meeting.

Sheila Sullivan and Marie Macdonald address the topic of “first confession.” Mary Valiquet and Corbin Eddy offer resources for use in high schools.

Renato Pasinato, Heather Reid, and Corbin Eddy write from their unique expertise on specific aspects of celebrating reconciliation.

We are most grateful to Archbishop Terrence Prendergast and Bishop Fred Colli for helping readers to understand all the dimensions of pastoral decisions. So often we read in the ritual books the phrase “for pastoral reasons” without realizing the breadth of the process that goes into weighing all the factors that make up those pastoral reasons. Hopefully their work for the Bulletin will help readers to understand how profoundly such decisions are tied to specifics in the immediate circumstances.

To conclude the segment on the Rite of Penance we have two articles on the ritual and non-ritual roads to reconciliation.

The editor wishes to thank all those who have taken time over the last few months to send your comments via the “Your Turn” page found at the end of each issue.
A Child's First Experience of the Rite of Penance

Reconciliation and Children of Catechetical Age: The Journey of One Parish

Sheila Sullivan

History

When Bishop Douglas Crosby, OMI came to the diocese of Labrador City-Schefferville in January 1998, the denominational system of education had just been dismantled. Less than three months later he assembled his priests, pastoral animators and parish representatives from the Labrador portion of the diocese under the banner “Hope: Planning Our Future.”

The agenda of that weekend included an overview of the General Directory for Catechesis. This milestone document continues to be our inspiration and orientation; the baptismal catechumenate is the model for all our catechesis in the diocese. Consequently, our parishes are now in the midst of a paradigm shift; initiation catechesis is no longer instructional but formational and conversion oriented. While our catechists continue to hone the tools needed to enrich this new ministry, one with a liturgical catechetical focus, we see ourselves at the beginning of a watershed event in the life of this diocese.

Bishop Crosby’s next decision was to restore the sacraments of initiation to their traditional sequence. Children baptized prior to catechetical age celebrate confirmation and first communion at a single liturgy during the Easter season. Children are also catechized around the sacrament of reconciliation and are invited to celebrate prior to completing their initiation process.

During that first year of change we began small and assumed the attitude that all our catechetical endeavours would be stepping-stones towards the full implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with adaptations for children.

Being fully committed to the vision of the RCIA our diocese hosted a North American Forum on the Catechumenate “Beginnings and Beyond Institute.” With this formation and renewed commitment we forge ahead slowly.

For children completing their initiation, that is the celebration of confirmation and first communion, and their parents/sponsors, the focus was on participation in the Sunday liturgy in particular and the season of Lent which marked the period of more intense spiritual preparation. We are indebted to Muriel Loftus and Lawrence De Mong, OSB for providing a model informed by the Directory For Masses With Children and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. In January of 1999, Muriel and Anna Dorner provided training in the Come Join Us at the Table resource for our diocese. Since that first
year, this process continues to be incorporated into our overall initiation journey; family and community orientation parallel our own vision of Christian initiation for children.\(^1\)

**Catechesis Grounded in the Word of God**

In that first year of "new beginnings," since our children were being immersed in the stories of Jesus and were already engaged to reflect on their lives in light of these stories, our parish team in Happy Valley, Labrador, thought it unnecessary to offer a lengthy catechesis to children who wished to celebrate first reconciliation. However, after studying articles 522–530, "Penitential Services/Sacrament of Penance" from the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, it was decided to follow its spirit and support the initiation team in offering a reconciliation catechesis, a penitential service and the sacrament of reconciliation during the Lenten journey.

(Now that we are more familiar with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its implications for reconciliation we are considering placing the penance service at the beginning of the reconciliation catechesis session.)

**The Process**

**Movement One:**

*God has forgiven you.*

*Go in peace.*

Parents and children were welcomed and remained together for the orientation. The words of Jesus were repeated in a reflective voice: "God has forgiven you. Go in peace." The words "forgive: given before" were nuanced and set the tone for proclamation and catechesis around the gifts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

**Proclamation**

The story of the lost sheep in Matthew's gospel was proclaimed and reflected upon, and formed the basis of the catechesis. A process of reflection that respects the children's spirituality is found in *To Walk With A Child*, Treehaus Communication.

Children and parents responded to the opportunity to tell their own stories of being lost and were eager to express their experience of joy at being found. The recurring themes of God's constant and unconditional love, change of heart, seeking forgiveness, and making peace were interwoven throughout the catechesis. There was no doubt that these children had identified with the shepherd and the sheep and felt and believed that Jesus loved them both when they did wrong and when they listened to the words of Jesus and did right. As well, these children indicated that they identified with the concepts of personal choice and its consequences, making up and being reconciled. References to the eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation as being signs of God's forgiveness were timely and parents were grateful for this insight.

**Singing**

Throughout, the themes were reinforced by the singing of "Jesus You Love Us", from the collection *Calling the Children*, 1992, Christopher Walker, published by OCP Publication.

**A Story from Bernard Hårring**

In the course of that session, I told a story I had read some years ago in a *Catholic Update* (St. Anthony Messenger Press) article written by Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M., S.T.D., who had heard the story from the great moral theologian, Bernard Hårring. This story focused on the real point of the sacrament of reconciliation.

\(^1\) A valuable additional resource has been *A Catechesis on Reconciliation*, Concacan Inc., 1995.
Father Harring asked his gathered assembly, "What is the most important thing about confession?" Various responses all spoke of the sacrament, were correct and incomplete. After some questioning, a little girl responded, "It's what Jesus does!"

This particular focus had a profound impact on our parents and their response indicated that it clarified some unresolved issues around this sacrament.

**Movement Two: Guided Meditation**

The children very attentively followed a guided meditation that led them to understand sin as refusing to love and saying "no" and separating themselves from family, friends and God. Parents were also invited to participate.

**Movement Three: Hospitality**

**Movement Four: Active Reflection**

Parents and children joined separate groups and were assisted by a catechist. The children focused on an activity around the Good Shepherd story, listened to a piece of relevant literature and prepared for the penance service. Parents were provided with some reflective questions that fostered awareness of the gifts of forgiveness and reconciliation in their lives. They were also encouraged to write or name their own memories and the memories they would like their children to have of the sacrament of reconciliation. After some private time they had an opportunity to ask questions, seek clarifications and discuss in small and large groups.

**Movement Five: Celebration of a Penance Service**

**Parent Responses**

"This has taken a ton of weight off me. Now I know, 'It is what Jesus does.'"

"I came only to hear what you had to say. My own first experience with the sacrament of penance was negative and I did not want my children to have the same experience. I had made up my mind they were not to celebrate this sacrament. We will now talk about this together at home and, with this new knowledge, I believe we will celebrate this sacrament on Wednesday night as a family.

"I have shed a lot of misinformation."

"The problem is not talking about sin but how to talk about it. I have new insights."

"This was a very positive experience for me." Many nodded their beads in agreement.

"I made my little seven-year-old go to confession a couple of years ago. Since it is no longer a part of the school system I decided I would not do that again. I know now that any decision to send him was based on the wrong reasons. From now on it will be the choice of my child to celebrate the sacrament, for only he knows if he has sinned. I understand it better now and this is a very positive way of viewing the sacrament. We will use this information at home in talking to our children. Now, I would like this sacrament to become a part of our family tradition."

"This was the first time any of my children celebrated a penance service prior to their first sacrament of reconciliation experience and now I am less fearful for my child. This was truly a celebration of God's love and forgiveness."

**Debriefing Catechists**

During the debriefing session with the catechists, it was shared that as we continue to open up the meaning of the sacrament of reconciliation for our adults and children, lingering negative experiences will dissipate and this sacrament will flow naturally into the lifelong process of living the paschal mystery. A priority recognized at that time and now being addressed is the concept of a post-baptismal catechesis supporting confirmation, first eucharist and reconciliation;
parents would continue to have an opportunity to pray with scripture, share in catechesis, explore moral development and in children, family spirituality and other relevant themes. It was felt that parish wide reconciliation catechesis is needed. Reconciliation celebrations outside Advent and Lent for the whole parish and with opportunities for mystagogy will go a long way toward changing some of the existing negative attitudes around the sacrament of reconciliation. It was also shared that as a parish, as we continue to work with and trust the process of Christian initiation, we will come to better understand its implications for reconciliation.

It was the hope of these catechists that over time, our Christian community will come to see that there is no activity unrelated on our faith journey and that it is Jesus Christ—the paschal mystery—who holds our liturgical sacramental moments together.

A Final Word
These children felt at home and were enriched by word, symbol and ritual throughout their initiation journey and therefore naturally showed signs of being eager and enthusiastic about celebrating another sacrament of God's love. During the rite of peace in the sacrament of reconciliation liturgy when the children took a stone from each of the gathered assembly and presented them with hearts, the solemn quiet reflected an intense and life giving moment. At the end of the evening, people with tears in their eyes thanked the catechists and pastor for providing such a positive, rich and meaningful celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation for these children's first experience.

Having had the privilege of sharing in the responses of these parents, having listened to how God's word was taking shape in the lives of their children, and having witnessed their sense of wonder and awe, my response was a resounding “yes” for a conversion process rather than an instructional model of catechesis for children about to celebrate their first reconciliation experience. The joy that these children exuded throughout their whole initiation process served to convince me all the more.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: A Mother's Experience

Marie MacDonald

I am a mother of four daughters ages 12–20. My youngest daughter celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation and confirmation at Our Lady Queen of Prince Parish here in Happy Valley and was involved in a process of formation very different from my other two daughters. They had followed parish programs modelled on a school-based curriculum and I found these programs to be rigid and knowledge based.

Two years ago this parish was at the beginning stages of implementing an initiation process for our children celebrating the sacraments of initiation. This

Marie MacDonald is an elementary school teacher and a volunteer catechist who also coordinates the catechetical program for her parish in Happy Valley, Labrador. She lives with her husband and three of her four daughters. Her eldest daughter is in University.
experience was not program oriented; it was Sunday focused. The word of God and our primary symbols were paramount; it was family and community oriented. As I travelled with my daughter and observed her attentive listening to the gospel stories, I saw something different happen. She was being led to connect these stories to her own life; and she was comprehending that she was being called to model her life after Jesus.

Inserted into the Lenten experience of the Come Join Us at The Table initiation process was an opportunity for a catechesis particular to the sacrament of reconciliation. The invitation to attend conjured up images of fear and guilt—images and feelings I have been carrying since my own initial experiences with the sacrament. As we prayed, shared scripture, told our own stories, sought clarifications I began to look at myself and my parenting skills differently; I discovered that from the cradle my husband and I were already preparing our children for this sacrament. I came to realize that when we were talking to our children about their choices and their consequences, when we were saying “I’m sorry” and encouraging our children to do the same, we were doing foundational work and setting the stage for our children’s concept of the unconditional love of God to be developed. Through this process I gleaned that we were living reconciliation at home, on the playground, at work; when we went to Church to celebrate the sacrament we were celebrating the forgiveness of God that we had already received. I also came to realize the significance of celebrating this sacrament with the community and now “hearing” the words of forgiveness from the priest who represents Jesus continues to have a powerful impact on me, for I realize now that there is a need to hear these words expressed. In the past so many connections were missing and to see all those possibilities for bringing our family life to faith and faith to our family life means we see with new eyes. Now I know that it is God who initiates forgiveness and that God’s love is not conditional on anything I do or we do in the family. This continues to make a difference as I share my faith with my children.

When we parents entered the Church for this particular sacrament of reconciliation celebration, our children gave us a stone and we were asked to hold it. When, at the rite of peace our children exchanged our “heavy stones” for a heart, I witnessed the most beautiful smiles in the world on the faces of the children and the adults. I knew in my heart that these children understood the meaning of this sacrament; for my own child, I knew she was experiencing peace and joy. I was so grateful that the fear which surrounded my own childhood experiences of the sacrament was not nor would be her experience.

The story of the Good Shepherd as it was presented and experienced that day has reshaped my own beliefs around God’s love and forgiveness. The facilitator for that day told us a story which centred around what was most important about the sacrament of reconciliation. It ends with a little girl telling the congregation that “It is what Jesus does.” This story has affirmed and confirmed so much for me around this sacrament and it certainly has helped me integrate my new learnings. The sacrament of reconciliation continues to be a more positive experience for our family.
Bringing High School Students to the Sacrament

A Reflection to Prepare High School Students for the Sacrament of Penance

Mary Valiquet

This prayer reflection is designed for use in a classroom setting with high school age students as part of the “in class” preparation for the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Preparing the Environment

If possible, desks are arranged in a semi-circle. At the centre is a focus table on which are placed:

- a cloth,
- a candle,
- a basket,
- a plant or some other item that speaks to your class.

Also required are:

- a piece of paper and a pencil for each student,
- copies of the reflection for those who will assist you with the reading,
- a copy of the “Prayer of Surrender” for each student,
- a boom box,
- a recording of “Carry You,” “I Want to Change,” or a suitable substitute.

Introductory Comments

Leader introduces the activity in these or similar words:

This [specify day of the week] you will have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament is a gift given freely, it is not something that you must participate in on this occasion, but rather it is something that you may wish to participate in.

It is good, whether or not you are going to celebrate the sacrament, to spend some time in prayer, in conversation with God. That is what we are going to do now.

Here is how our reflection will work. The next half-hour or so is to be dedicated to God. It will be a time of quiet, and so I ask that you respect the privacy and dignity of each person in the class.

You will be given a piece of paper and a pencil. These are to write your reflections on. Your reflections are your own, they will not be marked, nor will they be read. There will be an opportunity toward the end of our prayer for you to place your reflections in the basket. The basket will later be brought to the chapel and will be part of the prayer of our community.

At the end of our reflection time we will recite together a prayer. There will be a closing song.

Are there any questions?

Reflection

Introduction

Leader:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Loving God, we gather in your presence to reflect upon our last couple of weeks.

Mary Valiquet is chaplain at St. Mark High School in Manotick.
We ask for the grace to be honest with ourselves as we enter this reflection time.

May we always remember your mercy and compassion.

All: Amen.

Leader then instructs students: Slowly, quietly come into the presence of God who loves you.

Journalling with the Word of God

Please remember to allow long enough pauses between each part of this section. The students need time to quiet themselves and also to reflect.

1st Reading

Reader (or Leader): “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24.31).

Leader: Where has God been apparent in your life in the last day, in the last week, in the last month? Take a moment now to write on your sheet of paper about those events, people, or places in which God has been present.

2nd Reading:

Reader (or Leader): “They said to each other, ‘Wasn’t it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24.32).

Leader: Thank God in the quiet of your heart for being present in your life. You may write down that for which you are grateful.

3rd Reading

Reader (or Leader): “Search me, O Lord, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts” (Psalm 139.23).

Leader: Spend some time now thinking about what is keeping you from having a relationship with God, with your friends, with your family, your teachers, your co-workers.

4th Reading:

Reader (or Leader): “See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139.24).

Leader: Write down those things that keep you from relationship. It could be previous hurt, lack of trust, fear. It could be alcohol, drugs, television, gambling. What is it for you?

5th Reading:

Reader (or Leader): “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11.28).

Leader: God is calling each of us to turn away from that which keeps us from a loving relationship with God and others. Offer God that which you are holding that weighs you down: the hurts, the pain, the anger. Allow God to be a presence in your life.

At this time play “Carry You,” “I Want to Change,” or a suitable substitute. Instruct the students to quietly come forward when they are ready to lay their piece of paper in the basket on the focus table.

Carry You

Lay down your burdens
I will carry you
I will carry you
Lay down your burdens
I will carry you
I will carry you my child
My child

Verse 1:
Because I can walk on water
Calm the restless sea
Rite of Penance • High School • Reflection

I'm weary watching
While you struggle on your own
Just call my name and I'll come

Verse 2:
I give vision to the blind
I can raise the dead
I've seen the darker side of hell
And I've returned
I see these sleepless nights
And count every tear you cry

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I Want to Change

Music by James Hollihan
Words by Russ and Tori Taff

Lord, You know my past
Like clay the pains of life have molded me
The years have brought so many things
From examples I could see
Some good, some bad, they're all a part of me
But I see my selfish motives
And my inconsistencies
And block upon block, the wall was built complete
Oh, please come and break the wall down
And show this captive heart how to be free

Chorus:
I want to be like You
I want to change
And not be trapped in the patterns my life has set for me
I want to be like You
Please help me change
Into what I was meant to be
Until all I can clearly see
Is the loving reflection of You in me
Teach me to forgive
Letting go of hurts I hide behind
Facing all of the things in me
I've buried deep inside
As Your healing love brings all of them to light
Let my life be an example
Of what true life can be

When it's given, like a gift, to those who need
Oh, please come and take control of
This yielded, willing soul and live through me
(Chorus)

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When the song has ended and all have finished with their paper, call their attention to the Prayer of Surrender and Commitment.

Prayer of Surrender and Commitment

All pray together:
Loving God,
I place myself in your presence now, as I make this commitment, which I believe your Son, Jesus, is calling me to make.

Send Your Holy Spirit upon me to help me pray.

God, my faith is weak.
Grant me, I pray, through Jesus, your Son, the gift of the faith.

Sweep away all my doubts and give me that assurance that only your gift of faith can impart.

Lord Jesus, I want to follow you completely.
I want to turn away from all sinful patterns in my life.
Help me to do this.

I give you all my cares, my worries, my fears, my selfish pride, all my difficulties.

I ask you to set me free, so that I can serve you.

Lord Jesus, I choose you as the only Saviour and Lord of my life
I surrender everything to you.
Concluding Prayer
Leader:
Gracious and loving God,
you continually call us into relationship
with you.
Guide our thoughts and actions
as we go about our day.

Help us to be a people of compassion
and love.
Bless us with the knowledge
and understanding of your grace.
We make our prayer
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation
in a High School Setting

Corbin Eddy

Only in light of sound theological
and liturgical principles are good
pastoral judgments made. Ordinarily, these principals are gleaned
from the rites. Liturgical leaders study the
rites and ask themselves what these rites
are expressing in word and sign about the
Christian life. They ask how people can be
prepared and drawn into them so that they
are truly authentic expressions of faith.
They ask what needs to be done so that
people can experience these rites and par-
ticipate in them in a full, conscious and
active way. The four previous articles in
this series have attempted to do that in a
general way. This article attempts to sug-
gest avenues for pastoral application of
these principles in the setting of a
Catholic high school.
The Directory for Masses with Children and
the excellent catechetical resources avail-
able for the sacramental preparation of
children (e.g. Muriel Loftus and Lawrence
DeMong, O.S.B., Come Join us at the Table,
Ottawa: Novalis, 1993) can offer valuable
insights about preparing liturgy for
teenagers, for the underlying dynamics
continue to apply to teenagers, as to all
groups of people.

At the eucharist, for example, people are
invited to gather, to listen, to pray for the
needs of the world, to offer, to give thanks,
to share food, and to be sent. How are
teenagers gathered? How do they listen
and respond to stories, to poetry, to the
presentation of idealistic challenge? How
do they offer themselves? How do they
rejoice in thanks and praise? How do they
share food and drink? How are they
challenged and sent?

Not only do these things happen in the
eucharist, but also in countless ways and at
many levels of experience. In preparing
liturgy for teens and preparing teens for
liturgy, it is important that these links be

Corbin Eddy is a presbyter of the archdiocese of Ottawa. He is currently a member of the for-
mation faculty and an assistant professor of liturgy at St. Mary’s University, Baltimore, MD.
made, and that the whole life of the school be a kind of liturgy. If, within the culture of the school, there is no gathering, no coming together around common stories, no common projects, no feasts and celebrations, no challenge to reach out to the world, the specifically liturgical expression of these realities will not have their necessary foundation.

The same is true of the sacrament of reconciliation. Here, too, there is gathering and listening. There is also introspection, examination of life and values, admission of failure and need for growth and change, proclamation of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, and being sent out renewed. How do teens understand and live these values and experiences? Does the general culture of the school encourage and foster these kinds of experiences? How can the formal liturgical tradition of the Church be brought to them and they to it so that it all “hangs together” and has a truth and authenticity about it?

This article will reflect on the three rites of penance discussed in greater detail in previous articles with a view to this kind of integration. Its aim is to distill some of the values found in each rite and to reflect on how these values can be expressed and celebrated in the sacramental life of the school and more broadly in its general culture.

A. Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents

The renewal in Rite I recontextualizes the aspects of confession and absolution and attempts to re-situate them in a context and atmosphere that celebrates the primacy and priority of God’s unconditional love and mercy. The priest, who represents the whole Church as bearer of that good news, is less a judge and more an instrument of God’s healing. The rite takes more the shape of a prayer meeting than a courtroom appearance. It begins with a greeting and proclamation from scripture focusing on God’s love and mercy. The confession of sin by the penitent follows that proclamation, is contextualized by it, and is put into its proper perspective. The priest’s counsel and joint determination with the penitent of an appropriate penance is followed by the “absolution,” which is a rich expression of forgiveness and reconciliation within the context of the community.

The priest extends his hands over the penitent’s head (or at least extends his right hand) and says:

“God, the Father of mercies, through the death and 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.”
R. Amen.
“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.”
R. His mercy endures for ever.

In terms of the values celebrated in this rite, which combines proclamation and celebration of God’s mercy, confession of sin, ongoing discernment about growth and change, absolution by the minister and praise and thanksgiving for God’s mercy, what can be said about the experience of a Catholic high school? How can these values be lived in the overall context of the school as well as in the celebration of the sacrament itself?

Is, for example, proclamation of God’s unconditional love and mercy an aspect of the counselling process in Catholic schools? Inspired by the dynamics of this ritual tradition, do counsellors and social workers see spiritual direction as an aspect of their relationship with the students? Is even a brief scripture or prayer a part of personal interviews with a counsellor in a Catholic school or in a vice-principal’s meeting with a student about a disciplinary matter? How can the values of Rite I be more broadly “inculturated” within the school community?
Is Rite I available and known to be available to staff and students in the school? Along with the lay chaplain and other support staff, is there a priest or priests included, who could be available for the celebration of the sacrament according to Rite I (e.g. one Friday morning a month)? What role does Rite I have in days of prayer or retreats for students and staff? How do people talk about or teach Rite I in the school context?

B. Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution

The renewal envisioned in Rite II attempts, in a service of scripture readings and a homily, to do with a larger gathering what Rite I does with an individual. It also attempts, with its public examination of conscience, to teach and expand the consciousness of people relative to the true meaning of an examination of life by suggesting areas in need of change or development. The meeting with the priest will be very short. Participants look on as each person is received, assured of God's love, and absolved through the ministry of the Church. Even in this personal moment, solidarity is being expressed. The lining up and waiting, (even slightly nervous watching) can feel somewhat like a "penitential procession." The community is in this together. Especially when celebrated during Lent, this penitential service can provide an important link with the renewal of the whole Church and related explicitly to the mystery-consequences of baptism-confirmation-eucharist to be reaffirmed at Easter.
In terms of the values incorporated in this rite: scripture and preaching, conscience examination and stretching, sense of solidarity especially during Lent-Easter in a journey of conversion, what can be considered relative to Catholic high schools?

Are such services available at student retreats and at certain moments of the school year, e.g. Lent? What is the quality of such services in terms of scripture, preaching, examination of life, music, opportunity for confession? Could the administration, chaplain, religion teachers, counsellors, social workers, and musicians, together with the clergy be more fully involved in the preparation of an examination of conscience and overall development of such services? Is the schedule of the school flexible enough to give these experiences a space that is seen to be significant—central to the life of the school?

In what way is an ongoing examination of conscience and education about moral values incorporated in the program of the school? Are moments of silence and prayer part of moral or values education?

Could a point for personal examination and appropriate silence be a part of the homeroom or school prayer each day of Lent as preparatory to the sacrament of reconciliation?

Are the traditional symbols of the Church, (e.g. sackcloth and ashes during Lent; water, paschal candle and white garment during Easter) used creatively and appropriately to link the school community with broader Catholic culture? Is Ash Wednesday understood and celebrated as a kind of enrolment for the sacrament of reconciliation? Is a festive eucharist celebrated with the school community during the Easter Season linking the great Christian themes of resurrection, new springtime and rebirth?

Are students encouraged to participate in parish celebrations of the liturgy, especially the Triduum? Are local parishes making efforts to incorporate students into these celebrations?

C. Rite for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance with General Absolution

This rite has its own special value and makes its own contribution to an understanding of and appropriate celebration of reconciliation with others and with God. It grows not just out of experiences of special need such as soldiers going into battle, or huge numbers of people for whom individual confession would be impossible, but expresses an aspect of our sense of sin and God's mercy. It highlights the absolute priority of God's love and mercy which extends beyond human capacity to fully understand, express, or confess our sinfulness.

There are aspects of sin such as racism, sexism, classism, consumerism, or what the Pope calls "unbridled capitalism" which go beyond individuals or groups of individuals and seem inherent in society—often just below the surface. A service connected with Rite III can focus on aspects such as this and pray for forgiveness and healing in the light of the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Its format is similar to Rite II and, since there is no individual confessing of sin, it can give even more time and attention to preaching and communal discernment and use some kind of creative gesture to symbolize a desire for forgiveness and healing (e.g. a procession in which each participant would bless him/herself with holy water or place incense on burning coals).

The following is based on a prayer card which one of my parishioners picked up at a cathedral in England which had been seriously damaged in the bombing raids of World War II and subsequently restored. It exemplifies the kinds of issues which would well be a part of the reflection leading to the kind of general absolution and general prayers for healing and reconciliation envisioned in Rite III:

Merciful God, forgive
The HATRED which divides
nation from nation, race from race,
class from class,
Merciful God, forgive.
The COVETOUS desires of people and of nations
to possess what is not their own,
Merciful God, forgive.
The GREED which exploits the labours of people,
and lays waste the earth,
Merciful God, forgive.
Our ENVY of the welfare
and happiness of others,
Merciful God, forgive.
Our INDIFFERENCE to the plight of the homeless and
the refugee,
Merciful God, forgive.
The LUST which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women,
Merciful God, forgive.
The PRIDE which leads us to trust in ourselves, and not in You.

This public prayer for forgiveness ends with a kind of pastoral challenge to the congregation: Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

These are the kinds of issues which cannot be forgiven or reconciled in the encounter of an individual with a confessor in Rite I, or even with a long line of penitents confessing as best they are able within the context of Rite II. They exemplify aspects of the "sin of the world" or the sickness of a whole culture which likewise needs forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and absolution.

Relative to a Catholic high school community, what can be said about the values incorporated in Rite III?

How are issues such as racism, sexism, AIDS and the stigma usually attached to it, consumerism, violence, the environment, etc. dealt with in the school? Are they dealt with in the context of faith and prayer? How does the school community handle situations where these sorts of issues surface?

What is the level of social consciousness in the school community? What kind of participation is there in pro-active projects on the local, national, and international levels—e.g. vigils relative to violence against women, the AIDS walk, concern with local food banks, development and peace initiatives?

Do assemblies and other settings that deal with issues such as these include scripture and prayer for healing and reconciliation? Is there a sense of the "sin of the world?"

Presuming that Rites I and II are available and accessible, would the local bishop consider celebrating Rite III in the high school setting?

I present these reflections and questions only as a starting point for discussion and pastoral decision-making. I hope that they will spark curiosity and interest to study more deeply the themes of penance and reconciliation and the ways in which they have been expressed throughout history with an eye to responding in a creative way to our own situation in Catholic high schools. The richness of our tradition can provide many interesting leads.

The words "penance" and "reconciliation" themselves point to the mystery of growth and change within community. Certainly the ways in which they are experienced, expressed, ritualized (sacramentalized) both in formal and informal settings will want to reflect the dynamism of our faith and hope, both in the enduring love of God and in the wonderful potential of young people.
Paying Attention to Spaces

In the house of the Church as in the house of the family, we pay special attention to those rooms in which we spend most of our time. In recent years, the "open space" concept for home design has dominated the housing scene. In designing kitchens that flow into the dining area, the living area and the family room, we acknowledge the reality that, for most families, separate rooms for these functions are unnecessary. The modern house of the family has no need for formal parlours or formal dining rooms. Similarly, the modern house of the Church makes little use of the formal reconciliation room and we tend to neglect rooms that are rarely used. Most parish communities find themselves having to resist the temptation to use the reconciliation room as a storage room or as the "bride's room." I recently had a conversation with a woman who could not understand why she could not use the reconciliation room to change her baby's diaper. (Our rest rooms are equipped with changing tables.)

When the parish community has decided to pay attention to this little used room, it is usually faced with several design difficulties. In most older church buildings, the reconciliation room is no larger than a closet, having been converted from the old three-stall confessional. Even in newer buildings, rarely are there windows in the room and, if the room is large, it is often used as a "multipurpose" room. Ideally, the reconciliation room should be large enough to comfortably hold two to three chairs, a table, kneeler and screen. (The extra chair offers the penitent a choice of where to sit in relation to the confessor.) As is the case with any other sacred object or space, it should not be used for anything but the celebration of the sacrament. When the community is fortunate enough to have this dedicated room, attention to decor and design is very important.

The Historical Context

In the Early Church

Traditional theology of the sacrament of penance teaches us that there are four key elements or steps in this sacrament: conversion (metanoia), confession, penance, and absolution (reconciliation). In the early Church, as this sacrament was developing, both in public canonical penance and later in the private Celtic penance, these four steps were lived in their natural order. A baptized Christian, having recognized his or her sin, and having arrived at a moment of metanoia, would resolve to change, and to confess this sin to a spiritual counselor or confessor. In the course of spiritual direction, a remedy for the spiritual illness would be suggested by the confessor and agreed to by the penitent. This penance would then be lived by the sinner privately or in community in the "order of penitents." In a subsequent meeting, when both confessor and penitent were convinced that the penance had restored spiritual health to the penitent, the sinner would be blessed and absolved of sin. Reconciliation with God

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and the Church would be the final step in this process. In canonical penance, the celebration of reconciliation was public and most likely took place in the cathedral church with the bishop as presider. In Celtic or monastic penance, the celebration of reconciliation was less elaborate and most likely took place in the confessor's study.

**Medieval Councils**

In the discipline developed at the Fourth Lateran Council and enshrined at the Council of Trent, this natural order was rearranged to insure that confession and absolution would be connected and thereby guarantee the connection of the "quasi matter" to the form of this sacrament. Canonical public penance has disappeared, though a ritual for public penance remained in the ritual books as a museum piece. Monastic private penance had won the day and was the rule in most of Christendom. The screen separating the confessor and penitent was introduced not to provide anonymity for the penitent but to respect rules of modesty that forbade the private face-to-face encounter of clerics and women. Indeed, men were never forced to use the screen and confessed face-to-face, usually in a corner of the sacristy. The confessional box was invented and placed in the main worship space of the house of the Church not to provide for anonymity but to protect the reputation of confessors and female penitents. They were indeed *confectionals*, which emphasized the "works of the penitent." The granting of absolution, the celebration of reconciliation, took place in the confession box since the "quasi matter" of this sacrament and the "form" could not be separated. The box was invented for the confession of sins and was never an adequate place for the celebration of the liturgy of reconciliation.
The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council expressed a desire that the rite and formulas of the sacrament of penance be revised. The post-conciliar committee revised the liturgy of penance and offered the church three liturgical rites of reconciliation intended to replace the Tridentine ritual. In practice, the official Rite for the Reconciliation of Individual Penitents is rarely celebrated according to the published ritual. In the reconciliation room, most confessors and penitents celebrate an individually created hybrid of the Vatican II and Tridentine rites. In this unofficial hybrid, confession is most often the first step in this liturgical process. Absolution, the celebration of reconciliation, follows (so as to maintain the connection of matter and form) and the penance will be lived or prayed at a later time. The design of the reconciliation room is made difficult by the reality that most Catholics are still "going to confession" and living the Sacrament in its Tridentine incarnation. The screen is still preferred by many penitents since they have come to "make a confession" and the liturgical rite of reconciliation for individual penitents has never been a celebrated reality.

Naming the Space

We call it a "reconciliation room" and most church bulletins and marquis announce "the sacrament of reconciliation." In reality, the first thing we do in these rooms is confess, and since this is by far the most demanding element of this process on the individual penitent, the room is still a "confessional." Architects and decorators must take care that the rooms are a comfortable confessional and a worthy place for the celebration of reconciliation. Undue emphasis on the confessional will result in a dark, uninviting space where the privacy and anonymity of the penitent will be guaranteed. Undue emphasis on reconciliation will result in a space that does not give the penitent his or her right to privacy and anonymity. If you pardon the pun, the challenge lies in the reconciliation of these two needs.

Arranging the Space

Though the instructions call for a screen, a full-length opaque curtain or a rice paper screen partially dividing the room will better serve the purpose. The chair for the confessor should be placed behind the curtain or screen so that he is unable to see the penitent entering the room, but sufficiently in view and obviously postured so as to converse with the penitent who will occupy the other chair. The kneeler may be placed in front of the curtain or screen, so that anyone wishing to kneel will be given the right to anonymity. Between the chair of the confessor and the chair of the penitent, a table should be placed with an open lectionary or bible, for the proclamation of the word during the sacrament. A crucifix and appropriate art should decorate the walls. A strategically placed window looking into the worship space or in the door of the reconciliation room may, regrettafully, be necessary to protect both confessor and penitent from insinuation, slander or false accusation.

Using the Space

When the first rite is celebrated according to its rubrics, the screen or curtain becomes a very cumbersome obstacle to the liturgy. If confessors were to use the rite in its entirety the screen would soon fall into disuse. The proclamation of scripture, homily, shared prayer, offering of moral counsel and the imposition of hands are all made difficult, if not impossible, by the presence of the screen. Tridentine liturgy invented confessionals and screens; the revised liturgy of the Second Vatican Council will certainly, in time, see the end of these physical barriers between confessor and penitent. In the meantime, reconciliation rooms should reflect the preference for liturgy celebrated face to face while providing the option for anonymity.
Music for Reconciliation
Heather Reid

And did not Jesus sing a psalm that night
When utmost evil strove against the Light?
Then let us sing, for whom he won the fight,
Alleluia!

Fred Pratt Green

In Praise of God’s Mercy
Since the Second Vatican Council, the sacrament of penance has undergone much change and many adaptations in its liturgical celebration. This sacrament has found new life in its communal forms whether Rite II (Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution) or Rite III (Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution). The celebration of these communal liturgies, as for most liturgical rites, is always enhanced by singing and instrumental music.

References to music of any kind in text of the Rite of Penance are very few. While most liturgical musicians would likely welcome more assistance from the official books, it is perhaps not surprising that little mention is made of making music about sin or guilt. And for good reason! Singing at reconciliation celebrations is primarily about God’s love, mercy, our release and forgiveness through God’s grace and graciousness; and there is a great repertoire of music about God’s mercy, freedom, forgiveness and about our desire for that mercy. The “Pie Jesu” of the old Requiem Mass, for one example, has been set to beautiful music by several composers.

Three Facts to Keep in Mind
Guiding principles for all liturgical celebrations use the Sunday eucharist as the norm. This applies to celebrations of funerals, weddings, baptisms and reconciliation. To choose music wisely and appropriately for communal celebrations of penance, one must know how to choose appropriate music for the Sunday celebration.

In choosing music for reconciliation liturgies one must recognize three important liturgical theological facts:

• Transformation of the participants into the body of Christ is one of the goals of all liturgical prayer.
• The nature of Rites II and III is communal vs. individual.
• Reconciliation is a sacrament of “having been forgiven,” the sacrament of a loving, gracious God whose arms embrace us without reserve.

How can the choice of music enhance these realities?

Good Beginnings
Both of the communal forms of reconciliation begin as does the Sunday eucharistic celebration: a song, a greeting and an

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opening prayer. The opening hymn should be chosen from the regular parish repertoire.

Bernadette Farrell’s “Praise to You O Christ Our Saviour” (CBW III # 442) serves well here in Advent or Lent, with the congregation singing the refrain and the choir or cantor doing the verses. A sung penitential rite known by the congregation, i.e. a sung Kyrie litany with invocations in praise of God’s mercy, a seasonal hymn (since these celebrations are usually in Advent or Lent), a song or hymn with a penitential theme could also be used, e.g. “The Master Came to Bring Good News” (CBW III # 439).

A seasonal psalm that is familiar to the whole parish makes for a sound and simple beginning. (Try not to choose a psalm that emphasizes only personal or individual sin and make sure it turns to an expression of trust in God before the singing stops.) Hymn (strophic) versions of the psalms, like “Have Mercy, Lord, On Us” (CBW III # 358) would work well, especially if the congregation knows the melody. (Or check the metrical index for more familiar alternative melodies.)

**Liturgic of the Word**

The Sunday liturgy of the word is the norm for the liturgy of word in celebrations of reconciliation: therefore the psalm and gospel acclamation are sung.

Depending upon the scripture readings, settings of Psalm 51, 130, 16, 25, 32, 85, 119, 139 will be appropriate for the responsorial psalm. Michael Joncas’ setting of Psalm 130 “With Our God” (CBW III #374) is quite beautiful and singable; the music combined with the text assure us of God’s mercy and love: “With our God there is mercy and the fullness of redemption, God will save us from trials, and will answer whenever we call.”

The gospel acclamation is always to be sung; using whatever one is being sung in the parish for the season makes the most sense.

**Examination of Conscience and General Confession of Sin**

The “Examination of Conscience” (or examination of life) and “General Confession of Sin” in both Rites II and III may take the form of a sung litany. We sing of our sin, acknowledge it, and ask God’s pardon. If it is Lent and the parish community celebrates the scrutinies on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays, then the invocations found there (and adapted for use by the baptized) could be used in a penitential celebration. Or the invocations could be spoken and the
community could respond with a sung “Kyrie” or “Lord Have Mercy.” The Taizé version found at CBW III # 266 has met with great success in many situations. Again, if the community is singing the penitential rite on Sundays, use the same version; because the people will be familiar with it the litany can truly be the sung prayer of the people.

**Individual Confession and Absolution**

In Rite II, during the individual confessions, music can be a clear expression by those who are waiting and those who have already confessed, of the communal aspect of the liturgy. These communal songs can be interspersed with instrumental or choral singing as necessary depending upon the number of penitents. Consider Lucien Deiss’ “Grant to Us, O Lord” (CBW III # 621A), or Marty Haugen’s “Healer of Our Every Ill” (CBW III # 363) or “Eye Has Not Seen” (CBW III # 482) as possibilities here. These have refrains that a congregation can easily learn. Seasonal songs may also be appropriate, e.g. for Advent: the Taizé chant “Wait for the Lord” (CBW III # 319), or for Lent: “Come and Journey with a Saviour” (CBW III # 476 which uses the Herbert O'Driscoll text with the tune BEACH SPRING).

**Sign of Intentionality**

In Rite III (#61), the penitents are invited to give a sign of their desire to be forgiven. This may be done simply by kneeling or bowing and silently taking responsibility. Many parish communities though, prefer a more intentional gesture on the part of those wishing to celebrate.
- A penitential procession with incense may be used. Singing a version of Psalm 141 would be highly appropriate here, especially if the community celebrates evening prayer regularly and has an appreciation for its meaning in this context.
- During Advent the community may be invited to light tapers and sing of their desire to follow Christ, the Light, using Bernadette Farrell’s “Christ Be Our Light” (Oregon Catholic Press); alternatively, use David Haas’ “Be Light for Our Eyes” (CBW III #305).
- Some communities prefer to have a procession for the imposition of hands.

Whatever gesture and whatever music is chosen, it is important to remember that pieces with a sung refrain work best for processing; repetition helps a community to own its prayer and praise. They sing better too!

As mentioned earlier, the music minister chooses music for reconciliation celebrations based on the Sunday eucharistic celebration as norm. When choosing music for Sundays the appointed scripture of the day is one of the factors for consideration. This may also apply to communal penance celebrations, during the confessions (Rite II) or the procession in a general absolution celebration (Rite III). So if Jesus’ proclamation of the Beatitudes is the chosen gospel, it might be appropriate to have David Haas’ sung version, “Blest Are They” (CBW III # 522), as one of the selections. In this way members of the assembly echo the good news to one another as they approach the priest.

**Proclamation of Praise for God’s Mercy**

All rites call for a proclamation of praise after the confession and absolution, whether individual or general. In Rite II this is often problematic because, contrary to what is prescribed in the Rite of Penance, penitents are often not encouraged to stay until all have confessed; rather the formal liturgy has already been concluded before the individual confessions, with penitents simply wandering home as soon as they have “had their turn.” Liturgy planners can prepare the assembly for remaining through to the end by means of bulletin explanations or announcements before the liturgy begins.
The presider too can help by explaining the importance of the community giving praise for God’s mercy and forgiveness.

Any hymn or song of praise is appropriate here. The rite particularly recommends the “Magnificat.” A parish music ministry would be wise to have at least one setting of this as part of the regular parish repertoire. In parishes where evening prayer is celebrated, the setting used on those occasions should be used. There are several settings in CBW III as well as others in general use.

If a parish community knows a “Te Deum” that would fit. If the congregation is not comfortable yet with communal singing it would be wise to choose a very well-known song of praise, e.g. “Sing a New Song” (CBW III # 563) or even “Holy God We Praise Your Name” (CBW III # 555).

No matter the season, Advent or Lent, this song of praise should be joy-filled and lively. Using additional instruments e.g. trumpet, harp or even tambourine can help the assembly to express their gratitude and praise to a gracious, merciful God. Other versions to consider are: Haas’ “Holy is Your Name” or Cooney’s “Canticle of the Turning.” Both have familiar, very singable melodies.

It really isn’t necessary to sing a recessional song or hymn after the hymn of thanksgiving at the end of Rites II and III. (Similarly in the Sunday eucharistic celebration no final hymn is called for in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.) However a missioning forth song or a hymn of praise may be sung if desired.

Celebrating with Children

When choosing music for penance celebrations with children or youth the same Sunday mass criteria apply. The goal is always to make sound pastoral, musical and liturgical decisions so that the assembly’s prayer and participation are assured.

A Note About Psalms in Penance Celebrations

The psalms contain rich laments and poignant appeals for God’s mercy; they are perfect for communal reconciliation celebrations. Think of these familiar cries: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!” (Psalm 130.1–2). Or Psalm 51, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit” (Psalm 51.10–12). The psalms were originally meant to be sung; they are therefore more adequately expressed through music rather than through spoken words alone.

Conclusion

The music minister’s task is never easy, because music is so integral to the ritual and liturgical life of the Christian community. But, if we let the praise to a loving, gracious God by the assembled community be the guiding principle when choosing music for reconciliation celebrations, and if we know our assemblies and our parish repertoire, then our celebrations can be joy-filled and uplifting. Our assemblies will indeed praise God with their hearts and their voices. The community will, through good celebration, be invited to ongoing transformation into the body of Christ. Then the refrain on the lips of the forgiven, freed community of sinners can only be: “How can I keep from singing?”
**Prayerful Examination of Our Lives**

Corbin Eddy

"Blessed Are You" (Matthew 5.3–10)

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for giving the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit.”

Forgive us for the times we have put our own comfort above all else, and for using selfishly the good things you have given us. Pardon us for our failure to realize we are spiritually poor and need your help at all times, even when we succeed.

All sing refrain: “Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed. Recreate in us your own spirit, Lord” (CBW III #621A).

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for giving the earth as a heritage to the gentle.”

Forgive us for our arrogance and self-centredness in going after the good things of the earth. Forgive us for abusing the earth and exhausting it. Forgive us for the way we have trampled on the earth and on other people, to get what we want and to have our own way.

All: Refrain

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for comforting those who mourn.”

Forgive us for the times we have failed to bring comfort to people who have come to us in need or in suffering. Pardon us for being so self-centred that we could not even recognize people in need.

All: Refrain

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for satisfying those who hunger and thirst for what is right.”

Forgive us for our attitude of seeking our own will, right or wrong. Forgive us for hungering and thirsting after things without even thinking about whether they will help us to serve you.

All: Refrain

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for showing mercy to the merciful.”

Forgive us for failing to forgive others. Pardon us for passing judgement on others, and for the enjoyment we have taken in criticizing others.

All: Refrain

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for showing yourself to the pure of heart.”

Forgive us for the times we have thought of others or used others for the sake of our own pleasure. Pardon us for our unwillingness to accept our sexuality, for running away from it rather than seeing and using it as a gift from your hands.

All: Refrain

Presider: “Blessed are you, Father, for giving the name of "children of God" to peacemakers.”

Forgive us for the times we have made war on others in our hearts. Forgive us for brooding over hurts and grievances. Pardon us for the times we have come to your altar without first reconciling ourselves with our brothers and sisters.

All: Refrain

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Presider: "Blessed are you, Father, for giving the kingdom of heaven to those who are persecuted in the cause of right." Forgive us for failing to accept suffering in our own lives, and for bringing suffering to others. Forgive us for persecuting, in our hearts and in our action, those who do not see things our way. Pardon us for hesitating to hear your word and do it, out of fear of being persecuted as Jesus was.

All: Refrain

"He Has Sent Me" (Luke 4.18–19)

Presider: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me."
Do I understand myself as uniquely created—chosen—gifted? Do I respect myself, take my self and my place in life seriously? Do I know myself as loved, embraced, sealed, and anointed by God?

All sing refrain: "Kyrie, Christe, Kyrie eleison."

Presider: "He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed."
Have I allowed myself to hear and believe the good news that I am called to fullness of life? Is there anything or anyone that I allow to oppress me? Do I hear God's call to freedom? Am I my own person? Am I good news for others? Do I hear God's call to freedom? Am I my own person? Am I good news for others? Do I affirm them? Does my relationship with others invite growth, freedom and joy?

Refrain: "Kyrie, Christe, Kyrie eleison."

Presider: "He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted."
Do I allow myself to admit my weaknesses and failings, to confess my sins, or do I always have to be or appear to be perfect? Have I been open to allowing my own wounds to be healed, my sins forgiven, my broken heart mended? Am I an instrument of healing and reconciliation for others, or do I find myself avoiding getting involved? Do I look for opportunities to bring life, peace, and joy into the world?

Refrain: "Kyrie, Christe, Kyrie eleison."

Presider: "He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives. And release to prisoners."
Is there anything that imprisons me, traps me, binds me? Habits? Feelings of animosity or anger? Grudges? Guilt? Arrogance? Cynicism? Low self esteem? Do I see myself in communion with Christ, an instrument of God's healing, liberation, and peace? Do I see others in communion with Christ and with me as instruments of peace and healing?

Refrain: "Kyrie, Christe, Kyrie eleison."

"You Have Searched Me and Known Me" (Psalm 139)

Enlightenment
Have I been forgetful of God, the source of my life? Have I given thanks and attention to God in silence and prayer so as to be in touch with the promptings of the spirit at work in the depths of my conscience?

Have I rejoiced at the wonder and beauty of the world of nature and of persons and struggled with the areas of life that are not so beautiful and wonderful? Have I understood my role in life as participating with God in the ongoing creation and recreation of the world of nature and of human society?

Have I sometimes failed to act, to create, or to celebrate because I believe that I have nothing to offer? Do I sometimes act as if everyone else were OK except me?

Have I found myself at times simply going about my own business almost refusing to
be troubled by the needs of those around me or the possibility that I might need to change and grow?

Within the context of my own family and immediate circle of friends, have I been sensitive and communicative? Is my love growing and developing, or do I sometimes take them for granted and leave well enough alone?

In the other responsibilities of my life at home, at work, or in the community, have I been earning my keep? Is my basic orientation to be a giver or a receiver? Am I using my talents and gifts with generosity and creativity or am I going through the motions?

Have I sometimes failed to respect the integrity of the truth, adding or subtracting to avoid embarrassment or to make myself look better that I am?

Have I been respectful of my own dignity and that of all other persons? Have I lived out and expressed my sexuality in a way that is consistent with human dignity and my own vocation in life?

Have I closed my eyes to the cries of the poor and needy, believing that there was nothing I could do or that it was someone else's responsibility?

Have I been attentive to the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and others who might require me to slow down and be in touch with aspects of life that I might prefer to avoid?

**Supplication**

Have mercy upon me, Lord. Forgive my self-centredness and my efforts to save myself with worries and anxieties. Lead me to know that you love me and have formed me by your creative gifts. May your spirit lead me to life in the light of your love, strengthened and purified by the remembrance of your goodness and mercy and the praise of your holy name.

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Does This Diocese Need General Absolution at This Time?: The Making of Pastoral Decisions

Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Archdiocese of Halifax

Terrence Prendergast

Shortly after my arrival in Halifax as archbishop (Fall 1998), I became aware that the ordinary way of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation for many of the faithful had become that of the third rite of reconciliation. As I describe it in this reflection, the celebration of the third rite of reconciliation refers to a parish or group celebration of penance, which has been announced beforehand as a communal rite of the sacrament, concluding with general absolution being given to all who are contrite by the one priest presider who might be, but generally is not, available after the service for individual celebration of the sacrament with penitents.

There were positive features ascribed to parish celebrations making use of the third rite in the above-mentioned way: large assemblies of the faithful celebrating joyously in Advent and Lent, a felt sense of the social nature of sin and reconciliation, a new discovery by many that they were loved by God and forgiven, something that may have eluded their spiritual life earlier on.

A number, not large, of the faithful continued to have recourse to the first rite of reconciliation, the personal one-on-one celebration of the sacrament. The second rite, a communal celebration with individual confessions heard by several confessors, was celebrated in only a few parishes.

But there were also worrying signs attached to the predominant use of the third form of reconciliation in our local Church. In a few parish churches and missions, confessional and reconciliation rooms had been removed during renovations to the parish plan or had been relegated to minor roles in the structure of the church building and in the overall life of the parish. The third rite was used during retreats (for example of children preparing for confirmation) and, in one instance because of parental concerns, even for first penance.

As soon as I became aware of the latter practices, I asked that the third rite never be used for first reconciliation and encouraged pastors and directors of religious education to offer those being confirmed the opportunity for personal reconciliation.

When preaching a mission for university students, I suggested to the chaplains that we schedule a celebration of reconciliation in the second rite. I was told that for this to be possible a catechesis would have to be given because the youth in the diocese were not used to individual confession. At the close of the catechesis, there was only one question, “Why can’t I just go to general

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absolution instead?" Despite this, the celebration according to the second form was appreciated by those who attended—almost all those who had come to the retreat conferences on earlier days.

In my first Lenten letter to the faithful (Lent 1999), I invited them to observe the season by celebrating the sacrament of penance in the first form. I was surprised by the reactions I received when visiting parishes. Several elderly people told me they had no intention of ever again in their lifetimes celebrating confession the "old way." My recommendation was described as "pre-conciliar" and inappropriate to Church life today.

Over the years in which the use of the third rite had evolved, some priests in the archdiocese did not agree that the conditions spelled out in Church legislation for celebrating the sacrament in the third form were to be found in our circumstances. Accordingly, they did not celebrate the third rite in their parishes. Thus the practice of the third rite was not universal in the archdiocese and there were inevitably difficulties when clergy transfers took place. Parishes went back and forth in their praxis of reconciliation, depending on the pastoral preferences of the pastor or administrator.

So common had the practice of the third rite become that few priests were in the habit of consulting with the bishop on whether the conditions for celebrating the third rite obtained; they were presumed to be present. In some instances, the condition of reminding the faithful at the close of third rite celebrations of the obligation on penitents to confess serious sins was neglected or poorly explained.

In meetings with the Council of Priests and once at a day-long seminar, I discussed with the presbyterate my concern, namely that the third rite, which was interpreted by the magisterium as a celebration meant to address rare conditions, had become the ordinary manner of celebrating the sacrament for many of the faithful. The overall conclusion of the consultation was that I should leave well enough alone.

In Fall 1999, the Atlantic Episcopal Assembly carried out an ad limina visit to the Holy Father and the Roman dicasteries. There, several of us discussed our unease with developments in pastoral use of the third rite. We were becoming, in the words Fr. Leonard Sullivan addressed to me in a conversation in Regina in 1988, "a Church that no longer confesses." I felt a particular concern for youth. They were not being initiated into seeing their joyous celebration of first penance as an experience to be repeated regularly in their personal spiritual lives.

Roman officials encouraged us to develop a renewed catechesis of the sacrament of reconciliation, as other countries had, and to realize that a return to the first rite would take time. As a result of these conversations, on my return to Halifax I shared with the Council of Priests my sense that a new direction in our practice of the sacrament of reconciliation was called for. I then wrote to the presbyterate a lengthy letter that included the following announcement:

Having prayed over the matter regularly in recent weeks and taken counsel with several bishops during the recent CCCB Plenary, I have now decided on the following course of action for our pastoral praxis of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I have determined that we must terminate use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation as the regular pattern of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in parish life. For recent practice has rendered it, in fact, the ordinary way that the majority of Catholics in our diocese celebrate the Sacrament of Penance. Instead, I wish our pastoral praxis to be such that our people have regular access to individual confession throughout the year, and, during Advent, Lent
and those special parish moments such as missions and renewal programs, to focus on the Second Rite of Reconciliation where possible.

This new focus must go hand in hand with a renewed catechesis on the importance and spiritual value of personal confession in each Catholic's response to the universal call to holiness.

Some implications of this will involve a redirection of some of our energies into catechesis on the reality of personal and social sin, of the importance of conversion and of the way in which encountering the Lord Jesus in the Sacrament of forgiveness needs to be an integral aspect of discipleship today.

Among the changes that this will require of us, I mention only a few, such as the following:

- developing a convincing catechetical program to help our people return to personal experience of the Sacrament of Penance;
- regularly scheduling time for confessions in our weekly ministry;
- helping young people make a confession at least once in each of the years that they are in the catechetical program after their first confession;
- restoring the confessional and the reconciliation room to a place of prominence in the life of our parishes and missions (and in those cases where the confessional or reconciliation room no longer exists, ensuring that a suitable place for confessions is designated);
- cooperating with fellow priests in neighbouring parishes to carry out the ministry of reconciliation according to the Second Rite (a general service with individual confessions).

Undoubtedly, this would not be an easy decision for me to present to the faithful or for the priests to present to their parishioners. I tried to anticipate some of the objections (for example, that I was depriving people of their right to choose the form in which they wished to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation; that other dioceses continued to celebrate as ours had and their bishops seemed to approve; etc.), but I tried above all to focus on the need for a renewal of our catechesis on the sacrament:

First of all, we need to stress the healing power of auricular confession, pointing out that its tremendous therapeutic value is recognized even by secular society (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous). Our preaching will need to include an explanation of the exceptional nature of the Third Rite, and of the need, on the rare occasions when it is used, to have the intention to confess serious sins to a priest at the earliest opportunity afterward.

Secondly, we need to give our people a summary of Church teaching with respect to the Sacrament of Penance or Confession . . .

Thirdly, we may expect some of our people's reaction to this news to include comments such as that they were under the impression that the Church had done away with confession.

Fourthly, some may be worried that their sins have not been forgiven in celebrations with general absolution that they attended. We will need to reassure them of the teaching of the Church that forgiveness was given through the general absolution to those who were sincerely contrite and properly disposed (Rite of Penance, 34). Whether or not their inner hurt and guilt was fully healed without giving verbal expression to the
truth of their sin is another matter that can be dealt with in Confession itself.

Fifthly, some may ask if my decision to restrict the practice of the Third Rite and the reception of general absolution implies that the practice in the archdiocese to date has been in error. To this we will need to answer that, until this new directive from me, every pastor had been granted responsibility to decide how the sacrament was to be celebrated in his parish. Even then, however, only the bishop could determine if the conditions allowing the Third Rite were present in the archdiocese.

My decision should not be seen as a negative judgment upon pastoral practices determined in earlier circumstances. On assuming responsibility for pastoral decisions regarding his diocese, a new bishop needs to make his own assessment of the situation in the diocese and whether the conditions under which the practice is permissible exist.

A bishop's decision to allow, even to a restricted degree, use of general absolution, having listened to the experience of his pastors, enables him to arrive at his personal determination. This is not a judgment upon past decisions, but an assessment of the current situation faced by the present Ordinary.

Sixthly, some parishioners, especially those involved in bodies such as parish councils and liturgy committees, may raise some of the same concerns you brought to my attention, observing that the celebration of the Sacrament with general absolution has often been experienced by the parish as a beautiful and moving experience of communal prayer, repentance and reconciliation. They would not wish to lose this by a return solely to the First and Second Forms of the Rite of Reconciliation.

While not wishing to deny the validity of such comments, the community, in this view, seems to take priority over the individual. However, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not given to the Church for the assembly in general. It exists for the sake of the conversion of the penitent who seeks God's forgiveness. Pope John Paul II emphasized this in his first encyclical, when he stated that the sacramental celebration of Penance serves the individual sinner's conversion, for which a moment of auricular confession of sin and trust in divine mercy is indispensable. The community can never be understood to take the place of the individual (cf. Redemptor Hominis, 20).

As well, the value of a communal form of penance and absolution cannot be determined solely on the basis of the beauty of individual celebrations. The relevant criterion must be its long-term fruitfulness. As I noted earlier, the ordinary way that the majority of people celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in our diocese is now by means of the Third Rite. Thus our recent history has borne fruit in a situation which is at variance with the teaching of the Church, which asks us to uphold private confession as the sole ordinary way of celebrating the sacrament (cf. Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, 33).

Finally, it may be argued that the appearance of Rite III next to Forms I and II when the 1973 Rite of Penance was promulgated led some Catholics to conclude that general absolution is one of three normal ways of celebrating the sacrament, and that it therefore
can be selected at will. However, the use of general absolution has always remained subject to the norms issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in June 1972 and reiterated in the Code of Canon Law of 1983 (canons 961.1-2).

Some may see the widespread abandonment of the practice of confession by our people as justification for a continuation of general absolution. However, pastoral practice in a parish or diocese can only be based upon the currently existing discipline of the Church. Present directives envision the use of general absolution only in situations of "grave necessity," the determination of which involves an assessment of the access which penitents have to confession, and whether their inability to make a confession, through no fault of their own, would result in their separation from eucharistic communion for an undue length of time. When we encounter large numbers of people who have turned away from the practice of confessing their sins, we are dealing not with a lack of access to confession, but with a lack of understanding of sin and of the need for ongoing conversion in a disciple's life, and of a lack of a sense of need or desire for the Sacrament.

The reasons for this situation are many and complex, and rash conclusions are to be avoided. It is a serious problem which needs to be addressed. Discussion as to the adequacy of our current sacramental discipline to respond to these various needs of the people and how it might be changed is a matter of some speculation, which would need to be referred to higher authority for decision.

Discussion by pastors of how the Church could renew the sacrament, or re-envision the conditions under which general absolution could be considered acceptable would undoubtedly yield many valuable insights. These we should prepare so that they may be heard by the higher authorities of the Church.

This has not been an easy decision for me to take and my reflections above may not do justice to all the concerns you will have. Still, I invite you to cooperate with me in this pastoral decision and to seek graces from above to put it into practice with serenity and enthusiasm. For my part, I promise to continue to be open to your reflections on how we can strengthen our practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the good of Christ's Body, the Church, and to the praise and glory of God.

The reaction to the decision was both positive and negative. From the communications I received I conclude that the way Catholics in the archdiocese understand the sacrament of reconciliation after some twenty years of celebrating the third rite comprises a wide range of positions.

Some intuitively know how to make the distinctions between the respective rites. Many are confused.

Some have decided they will never celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation according to the first rite again. I think this particular view is regrettable. How it will be handled will depend on priestly interaction and sensitivity in each particular case.

Some have concluded that the Church has "done away with confession": this is just plain wrong and needs to be set right. Many people need to be encouraged to see for the first time, or rediscover, this sacrament as the great gift of God that it is.
My great concern is for those who are willing and open to celebrate reconciliation individually but who do not know how to do so (especially many who were not well-catechized about reconciliation over the last twenty years) or who have forgotten how and, therefore—out of shame or for want of a teacher to help them—are deprived of the riches of the sacrament.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the practice which developed of announcing general absolution as the form of celebration which the penitential rite will take remains at the heart of the difficulties with pastoral practice involving the third rite.

When and if, as the legislation permits, more penitents come to a reconciliation service expecting the second rite—and therefore that they will confess their sins individually to a priest during the service—and a goodly number of confessors on hand to hear those confessions cannot do so in a reasonable period of time, only then may recourse be had to granting absolution, always with the proviso that the faithful are reminded that serious sins are to be confessed as soon as possible and before another such celebration. Barring some other kind of emergency, this seems to me to be the only legitimate use of the third rite available to us.

The best way to welcome people back—especially those coming back because of outreach efforts such as the “Landings” program—is not to celebrate reconciliation with general absolution but to invite those “returning home” to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation according to the first rite, showing them how to do this in a manner that is both compassionate and truthful.

Two final remarks:

• First, after a difficult Advent 1999 season in which many pastors and parishes were caught off guard (they had already planned third rite celebrations) and did not plan communal celebrations, creative efforts began with Lent and Advent in the Jubilee Year 2000. A whole gamut of celebrations by regional groupings of parishes that assisted each other came into being. So, too, did additional hours of priestly availability for reconciliation. Often confessors were kept busy for several hours at a time.

• Secondly, the first rite of reconciliation is still in need of updating, particularly because of the general lack of incorporation into the format of the celebration of a reading from the word of God at the outset, to which the penitent’s confession is the response. Many penitents, after a hiatus of years when they did not confess, have reverted to former practices that, in my view, call out for renewal. Here is a challenge remaining to be tackled that regular use of the third rite keeps the Church in Canada from addressing.
Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Diocese of Thunder Bay

Fred J. Colli

“Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, ‘clasping sinners to her bosom, is at once holy and always in need of purification, and follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.’ This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. 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” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1428).

The sacrament of penance or reconciliation in the Church today is, without question, either the sacrament most ignored, or the sacrament most misunderstood in our modern culture. Whether through the development of our western, secular, and materialistic society, or through a gradual interior shift in understanding among the people of God, this sacrament, although still appreciated and recognized as important, is seldom frequented in the style or manner of the past.

In my twenty-six years in ministry, I have shared in the sacrament of reconciliation numerous times. From the celebrations for students in our Catholic schools, to the individual confessions heard each Saturday afternoon in most parish churches, and including the particular ‘community’ celebrations taking place during the seasons of Advent and Lent, the sacrament of penance or reconciliation is seen as the ‘best’ way to prepare one’s heart and mind for a proper and joyful sharing of faith, especially at Christmas and Easter.

A tendency, which seems to have developed over the past twenty years, is visible in the ‘community’ celebrations of penance in our parish churches, primarily during Advent and Lent. These liturgical seasons lend themselves to a careful examination of one’s heart, and foster a desire in individuals and in the community to turn away from things that would hamper their relationship with the Lord, to change one’s behaviour for the better, and to recognize the grace of God working in one’s life. We do this to prepare for these great feasts.

Since my ordination as a priest, I have noticed that the Church has strongly encouraged celebrating our faith as a ‘community,’ or as a ‘body,’ the body of Christ. We have been instructed to make sure that each particular celebration truly reflects the ‘community’ of the Church. I believe the people of God have learned this lesson very well. They recognize that God saves us as a ‘community of people,’ and that praying, sharing and joyfully celebrating our faith in the Lord and the redemption that he has won for us, is best done as a ‘community’ or as a ‘family.’

I feel that the importance of this aspect of ‘community’ has truly touched the lives and hearts of our people. So much so, that in each celebration of a sacrament, they recognize and desire to share this special and holy event of God’s grace united with others. I think of the parable...
of the prodigal son or the forgiving father in Luke. A major concern of the father, after the return of his son, was the fact that they gathered ‘together’ to celebrate his return, and they recognized that the need for forgiveness was also a part of their own lives, just as it was in the life of the young son. In many ways, the people of God prefer and insist that our celebrations of faith be done together as a ‘family,’ for in doing so, we are strengthened in our faith lives through our presence and prayer together.

This appreciation of ‘family’ or ‘community’ by the people of our Church reflects the desire on the part of many to celebrate even the sacrament of penance in a communal way. This desire is particularly recognized in our regular practicing Catholics and comes from their weekly gathering at Sunday eucharist. It stems from our teaching and preaching about ‘community.’ It is evident in the Church’s call to share talents and gifts for the good of the community and to recognize that our faith is not just an individualistic relationship with Jesus, but that we are united to him as his body, as a communion of peoples. Emphasis is given, again and again, on the need to recognize our responsibility to one another and for one another, and to imitate the model of the early Church, where ‘community action’ is so clearly noted in the Acts of the Apostles.

This brings me to the question at hand, which is my pastoral approach to the celebration of the third form of the sacrament of reconciliation in my diocese. As a bishop of a small northern diocese, which extends for more than 220,000 square kilometres in area, and with parishes located outside the main city more than one hour’s journey distance from each other, for me to gather clergy and laity together for any particular function or celebration as ‘community’ presents quite a challenge. Distance, weather, time and availability are constant obstacles.

I once asked a good friend how he maintained such a healthy approach to life and work and remained so energized and enthused. He told me it was all a sense of ‘balance’ and ‘striving for the good.’ No doubt this advice is valid for healthy living, but can it also be applied to ‘spiritual’ lives? I believe it can.

Recognizing the importance and the need for reconciliation and forgiveness in our lives we know that the sacrament of penance is an indispensable grace given to us. This grace re-establishes our relationship with the Lord and his community lost through serious or mortal sin. We know too that it is also an important source of grace and strength for those who, although not estranged from the Lord through serious sin, are seeking continual help in their pilgrimage of faith. As the people of God, we recognize this need and we seek this grace particularly during Advent and Lent.

Coming together each week as a community for eucharist, it is only natural and logical for people to sense the need to gather again as a ‘community’ of sinners to seek God’s mercy. This coming together is an action of humility, for people stand side by side, knowing and acknowledging through their communal presence that they are sinners, and that all are in need of God’s mercy and healing.

Through my experience as a priest, and in discussion with my brother priests and with the laity, both in my own diocese and outside of my diocese, what has been most noted about the communal celebration of the sacrament of penance has been the sense of ‘healing’ and ‘holiness’ that is experienced as a community in this gathering. Coming together for the sixty minutes of prayer, allowing time for careful reflection, praise, meditation, catechesis and thanksgiving, everyone is given a sense of true sharing in God’s mercy and grace. In most cases and for many, courage is restored, a sense of community is strengthened, and hearts are opened to God’s healing peace. This is
very evident at the conclusion of the prayer and in the visible joy of the community.

After careful thought and discussion with the priests of my diocese, and due to the reasons noted above of desire for grace and healing, distance, travel, numbers and availability of priests, I have consented to allow the third form of the sacrament of penance during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

We strive for a 'balance,' as I mentioned earlier, for a healthy and sensible approach to so great a mystery. Along with encouraging the celebration of individual confessions, and making due time available for the first and normal form of the sacrament in their parishes, I encourage my priests to use good pastoral judgment in requesting the use of the third form of penance for their people. Use of the third form requires specific permission, good preparation and a holy and prayerful celebration of the sacrament.

With the limited number of priests within my diocese and also with the distances and hazards of travel during the winter months, it is almost impossible to envision another means by which the vast majority of God's people in our diocese could enjoy the grace and mercy of absolution and reconciliation. Past history has shown, and it is evident in many dioceses, that God's people gather with enthusiasm and humility for these celebrations. I believe the Spirit of the Lord is prompting their hearts to gather in such numbers. These numbers are generally too great, in order to use the first form of the sacrament properly.

Also, many pastors and bishops have heard of how the celebration of the third form of the sacrament has encouraged many to return to the celebration of the sacrament of penance on a more regular basis, availing themselves of the normal first form in order to seek the individual counselling and advice they will need in reorienting their lives to the Lord.

As a pastor of many, and as the chief shepherd in a diocese, my desire is that the mercy and grace of God be available to as many of my people as possible. I believe that the generosity and love of God reflects this. When the assembly gathers, in humility, in mutual respect, and in a sense of conversion, aware of their sin, they seek the Lord's mercy and forgiveness through their prayer together and they are strengthened and forgiven as a community.

I am aware that not all conditions are similar in all dioceses and that all bishops do not share the same reflection and pastoral direction as I do for my diocese. However, through my reflection and prayer, and through my pastoral experience both as a priest and as a bishop, I believe that the celebration of the third form of the sacrament of penance, in particular during the seasons of Advent and Lent, is a most holy and needed form of grace for our diocesan Church. I consider the third form of the sacrament of penance as a special means of grace and forgiveness, as a blessing for all, and in many cases, as the 'open door' of welcome for some, to a new life with God and his Church.
The Road to Reconciliation

A Forgotten Road

Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB

**Current Discontent**

Some recent discussion about the sacrament of reconciliation has centred on expanding the use of the third form, namely, general absolution. This option, however, is to be used only under certain clear conditions. In the current discussion about the sacrament of reconciliation and the decline in its use, I find that an important element has been missing. What is missing is a discussion of non-sacramental roads to reconciliation. It is good to think about reconciliation and forgiveness in a wider context and to explore its implications.

Moreover, there is also a general lament about the decline in the use of the sacrament of reconciliation by many of the faithful today. And it is true: the number of penitents in the confessional line-up is noticeably down from what it was a generation ago. And there are many reasons for this. They include re-evaluation of devotional confession, the decline in the number of priests, and a diminished sense of sin in the world today.

According to the popular thinking of many Catholics, and non-Catholics, the only way to receive forgiveness of one’s sins is to go to confession to a priest. This is not the case; a quick review of the teachings of our faith will make this evident.

**Baptism and Forgiveness**

The first sacrament of forgiveness, of course, is baptism. Article 977 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) makes this clear: “Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that we too might walk in newness of life.”

**In the Case of Serious Sin**

The sacrament of penance is mandated especially for serious sins. This is taught in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in article 1446: “Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion.” Elsewhere the CCC makes it clear that one must go to the sacrament to confess “serious sins” or “a mortal sin” (art. 1457).

**“Devotional” Confession**

In the past century, with the emphasis on regular reception of communion, there has been a great emphasis not only on celebrating the sacrament of penance for mortal sins, but also on making a “devotional” confession of less serious sin. In the thinking of some Catholics, one must confess venial or less serious sins before receiving the eucharist. However, this is not the teaching of the church. The CCC is quite clear that there are other ways to receive forgiveness of venial or daily sins. Article 1458, for example, says: “Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.” While there may be good results from devotional confessions,

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many people are now finding devotional confession a great difficulty. I believe it is this practice in particular that is falling off in recent decades. The shortage of priests and the resulting more limited access to the sacrament has only exacerbated this tendency.

Alternative Paths

The long-standing Catholic tradition is that there are other ways to receive forgiveness of sins. However, these have not been emphasized very much. I believe they need to be explored much more today. Here are some of the points made in the CCC:

• The Fathers of the Church "cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbour, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbour, the intercession of the saints and the practice of charity 'which covers a multitude of sins'" (art. 1434).

• The eucharist "is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins" (art. 1436). "The Eucharist "strengthens our charity ... and this living charity wipes away venial sins" (art. 1394). And, as St. Ambrose says, we celebrate the eucharist for the forgiveness of our daily sins: "If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy" (See CCC, #1393).

• "Perfect" 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" (art 1452).

Some Abiding Questions

As we can see, the Church teaches there are a variety of ways in which our daily sins can be forgiven outside the confessional. This raises some questions. If we bring our daily/venial sins to the eucharist for forgiveness, do we have to bring them again to the sacrament of reconciliation? Once they are forgiven, they are forgiven. Does the sacrament of reconciliation add anything? While the practice of a devotional confession can be very helpful, it is not strictly necessary to live a grace-filled life.

And then there's our rich tradition of non-sacramental means of forgiveness of daily sins, especially our active charity. What about the practice of living charity? How is this linked to forgiveness of sin? Is it our change of heart that gives evidence of forgiveness?

Today there is a growing practice of spiritual direction, by non-clerics. How does one's discussion of his/her faults and difficulties with a spiritual director facilitate a change of heart and forgiveness? Is there a need to take these daily faults to a devotional confession to a priest?

What does it mean today to have "tears of repentance" for one's faults? Does this mean feeling really sorry for what one has done? How do tears of repentance obtain forgiveness of sins?

How about efforts of reconciliation with one's neighbour? Or with one's spouse? Or with one's family? How does this bring about forgiveness?

Limiting the possibility of forgiveness of sins to the sacrament of penance/reconciliation is too narrow, according to the Church's tradition. Other sacraments explicitly celebrate God's forgiveness. Baptism is the first sacrament of forgiveness and eucharist forgives our daily sins. This applies also to the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

A hymn text by Frederick W. Faber says, "There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea" (Catholic Book of Worship III, #443). In the jubilee year we just completed, we celebrated the wideness of God's mercy. We need to do more reflection as a church on the many ways and methods God uses to shower his mercy and forgiveness upon us.
Introduction
There is an old saying, "A good beginning is a good end," and it applies, not only to matters of everyday life, but to sacramental theology as well. If we want to understand more about the nature and scope of the sacrament of reconciliation, we need to begin in the right place—with the Church's eucharist. This is because the eucharist is the centre of the entire life of the Church, and all of the other sacraments derive their meaning from it:

The catechesis of the eucharistic mystery should aim to help the faithful to realize that the celebration of the eucharist is the true centre of the whole Christian life both for the universal Church and for the local congregation of that Church. For "the other sacraments, as indeed every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are directed towards it" (Sacred Congregation of Rites, instruction Eucharisticum mysterium, May 25, 1967, no. 6: AAS 59 (1967)).

We look, then, to the eucharist, which is the very sacrament of the Church, to reveal who we are as a people and what we are about in our Christian lives.

The Eucharist
The most striking and remarkable feature of our lives is that we come together on Sunday to celebrate a sacred meal. We gather at table. We eat and drink together. And once we recognize the shared table and experience the shared food and drink, we gain a fundamental insight into who we are as Church: We are a table community, a family, the household of God.

The eucharistic prayer, which is the table blessing of the festive meal, makes this explicit when it says: "Father, hear the prayers of the family you have gathered here before you. In mercy and love unite all your children, wherever they may be" (Eucharistic Prayer III). And the New Testament letters, no doubt reflecting the eucharistic experience, attest to the same truth:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God (Ephesians 2.19-22).

Peace and Reconciliation
The eucharist, or Lord's Supper, radically reconstructs the world, fashioning peoples and nations into the new household of God, binding them to a covenant of love, and making unity and peace the hallmarks of their shared life. Thus the eucharist is the event that fulfills God's plan of salvation and the words spoken by Christ: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12.32).

From Sunday to Sunday the eucharistic celebration expresses and strengthens the unity and peace of the household of God. And if the participation of each one of us is to be honest and whole, we must carry that unity and peace in our hearts. We must not be estranged from the brothers and sisters at the table of the Lord. And this is where the call to reconciliation
comes into play. One is reminded of the words of the Lord:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go, first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5.23-24).

In the Church, reconciliation is always ordered to the feast.

The Domestic Shape of Reconciliation

Once we lay hold of the household nature of the Church we are in a good position to explore the shape and scope of reconciliation by drawing on the experience of our individual family life. Wives and husbands, sisters and brothers, parents and children all know the ways to achieve reconciliation.

If a husband and wife are at odds, it may be a matter of sitting down and talking the problem through to a loving resolution. Reconciliation may be expressed and realized through a sincere apology received with grace, a change of attitude, a gift of flowers, a kiss, or an unexpected expression of love. Our experience can be summarized in the following way: Reconciliation there must be, but there is a variety of ways to achieve it.

The Wide Reach of Sacramentality

Since the Church is fundamentally the new household of God, reaching beyond individual families to embrace the world, we can project similar ways of reconciliation among the brothers and sisters whose lives are centred on the Lord's Supper. Yet, the question remains: Do these transactions have any true sacramental value? Thus, are they, at least in some instances, a viable alternative to the Church's sacrament of penance?

It is true that when we talk about the Church and sacraments we practically always refer to the seven sacraments, which do indeed remain unique. But we must not fail to see that these sacraments are self-expressions of the Church, the household of God, which is itself a sacramental reality:

All those, who in faith look toward Jesus, the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of this saving unity" (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium], 21 November, 1964, no. 9).

To see this more clearly, let us return for a moment to the Sunday celebration of the eucharist. Those who are gathered around the holy table partake of the body and blood of Christ and are drawn into a profound communion of life in the risen Lord. In this way the household is constantly shaped and revealed as the body of Christ, the risen Lord's sacramental presence in the world. All of this may remind us of the words spoken at the Christian initiation of adults:

My dear newly baptized, born again in Christ by baptism, you have become members of Christ and of his priestly people. Now you are to share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among us, the Spirit sent by the Lord upon his apostles at Pentecost and given by them and their successors to the baptized (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 227).

An eminent Catholic theologian, Michael Schmaus, helped clarify the sacramental action of individual members of the household of God, writing as follows:

Although the Church appears as a hierarchically structured society, it can be active only through its individual members. Insofar as these act as members of the Church, particularly insofar as they fulfill the call to faith, hope and love that is the
essential characteristic mark of the Church community, they are acting sacramentally . . . .

It cannot be stated clearly how far the mediation of salvation by individuals reaches and what degree of intensity it attains, but it is impossible to doubt the strength of its reality. For everything a member of the Church performs in his faith in Christ is performed by Christ himself. Everything a Christian does as a believer is an act of grace . . .

The ways in which salvation is mediated through individuals are very numerous indeed. We may say that the whole of life—all one’s actions and words—is a proclamation of Christ which mediates salvation. We are not thinking, necessarily, of words which are explicitly Christian in content. All the words of comfort, support, and encouragement—or even of criticism, when it is constructive—are saving words through which God turns towards the person who receives them and gives himself to him (Dogma 5: The Church as Sacrament (Sheed & Ward, London, 1990), pp. 12-14).

Thus, acts of reconciliation undertaken by individual Christians outside the sacrament of penance have a sacramental character and mediate salvation. They are “performed by Christ himself” and “God gives himself” to those who accept reconciliation. Put another way, the sin (the division or estrangement) is remitted, forgiven, set aside, lost, forgotten, gone. We can summarize once again by saying that, in the household of God, reconciliation there must be, but there is a variety of ways to achieve it.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

What we have seen above does not in any way call into question the sacrament of reconciliation itself. It simply extends the ways in which the sisters and brothers of the household of God may achieve genuine reconciliation in the face of everyday faults (venial sins).

It is true that in the early history of the Church the sacrament was used exclusively for its primary purpose, namely, the remission of grave sin, which necessarily engaged the entire community of faith. But the practice of the Church changed as time went on, and the sacrament was recognized as an appropriate and highly valued forum for the remission of venial sin as well. Today, the Church continues to recommend the frequent celebration of the sacrament:

Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father’s mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1458).

In each situation, then, it remains for us to choose the way that will most effectively bring about genuine reconciliation with our sisters and brothers in the Lord.

Major Reconciliation

Although the Church has always held that daily faults (venial sins) can be forgiven in a variety of ways, it has also insisted that mortal sin, which is death-dealing to our relationship with God, must be dealt with in the sacrament itself. While this distinction may at first appear rather arbitrary, it is readily understood as long as we remember that the Church is the new family or household of God.

In our individual family life we know that reconciliation is achieved in a variety of ways. Everyday faults do not necessarily engage the whole family; wives and
husbands, and sisters and brothers, can be reconciled quite effectively on their own. But there are other matters that simply have to take a different route.

Let us say that Radbert is now sixteen years old and, as sometimes happens at this age, has become a very disruptive member of the family. It reaches a point where his father, worried about the family's well-being, says, "Radbert, you'll have to stop all this; it's destroying our lives." Radbert decides to get out of the house and live with a friend, but after a lengthy absence he realizes his mistake and dearly wants to go back home.

But how does he go about this? After all the anger and hostility in the background, and after his rejection of the family, Radbert can't simply walk in one day, sit down at the supper table and say, "How is everybody today?" No, Radbert will go home, seek out his father (who can speak for the household) and say, "Dad, I'm really sorry for what happened, and I want to come back home." And his father will probably say, "Radbert, we're really sorry that you left. We've been hoping and praying that you'd come back home. Let's get cleaned up, and then we'll go down together for supper."

The sacrament of penance is precisely the forum where these transactions of major reconciliation take place in the household of God. And it leads forward, with joy, to the penitent's return to the table of the Lord's Supper and the world's celebration of unity and peace.
Helpful Reading

The Rite


General


Canon Law and the Sacrament of Penance


Preaching and the Sacrament of Penance


Other Back Issues of the Bulletin


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Editor's introductory note: As the practice of sharing from the common communion cup appears with ever-greater frequency across Canada, concerns arise in many parishes about the risk of infection on account of this practice. Roman Catholics are not alone in these concerns. In particular, the Anglican Church, which has practiced communion from the cup since the Reformation, has monitored medical evidence pertinent to sharing in communion from the common cup. (See "Aids and the Common Cup," reprinted in Communion from the Cup, a report by the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy and the National Liturgy Office, CCCB, 1996.) The following is an excerpt from an information update written by David H. Gould, BA, MD, CM, FRCP, FICA, A.Th., entitled "Eucharistic Practice and the Risk of Infection" commissioned by the Anglican Church and approved by the Anglican House of Bishops in the spring of 2000.

Introduction
With the discovery of AIDS a number of fears have arisen regarding the risk of the infection being spread by the use of the "common cup" at the Eucharist. This in turn has led to a re-examination of Eucharistic practices and their potential for transmission of infection. This is not the first instance of such a concern being raised. The influenza epidemic in 1917 raised similar concerns, and the controversy has surfaced periodically since the sixteenth century.

Transmission of infection
At the outset, it is important to recognize that there are a number of general principles that govern the transmission of infection. In no case can exposure to a single virus or bacterium result in infection. For each disease there is a minimum number of the agent (generally in the millions) that must be transmitted from person to person before infection can occur. Our defenses against stray bacteria are immense and can only be overwhelmed by very large numbers of the infective agents. Each infective agent has its own virulence, and each individual has his/her own "host factors" which determine that person's susceptibility to infection. The interaction of the two determines the risk of infection for the individual.

AIDS
It is important to note that the breakdown of all AIDS cases in the USA by risk groups has not significantly changed since the illness was first described, showing that the disease has very limited modes of spread. Not a single family member of a person with AIDS has contacted the disease, even though occasional sharing of drinking cups, eating utensils and on occasion, toothbrushes has occurred.

Despite there now being many millions of cases of AIDS reported throughout the world, there remains no evidence of
transmission by saliva, let alone any evidence of transmission by using common drinking utensils. Furthermore, experimental evidence shows that wiping the chalice with the purificator reduces the bacterial count by 90%.

It should also be pointed out that the AIDS virus is destroyed by exposure to air, soap, and virtually any disinfectant (including alcohol) and therefore that normal cleaning procedures if performed carefully ensure protection. This should be remembered not only in the context of the Eucharist, but also in reference to those who minister to AIDS patients.

In an atmosphere increasingly dominated by litigation, no one in the medical profession is going to give any absolute reassurance even when scientific data indicates that strong reassurance can be provided.

**Other infections**

It must be admitted that it is difficult to be as reassuring in regards to the use of the common cup in the case of other infectious agents as is in the case of AIDS. But in the case of Hepatitis B virus - also of concern to health care workers because it too has been isolated from saliva of persons with hepatitis - it is possible to be reassuring. There is no evidence of any transmission by the oral administration of hepatitis-positive saliva. The same is equally true of bacterial Meningitis.

**What is the risk?**

Were there any significant risk to the eucharistic practices of the Anglican church for so many centuries it would seem likely that the evidence would reflect an increased risk for Anglican priests, who have been performing the ablutions for centuries. In fact the opposite is true. Nor do priests appear to have been regularly stricken with any communicable disease that could be traced to the chalice in all that time. Additionally, no episode of disease attributable to the common cup has ever been reported.

Thus for the average communicant it would seem that the risk of drinking from the common cup is probably less than the risk of air-borne infection in using a common building.

Nevertheless, eucharistic ministers should be instructed in the proper way to wipe the chalice between communicants. Some procedures that are helpful include: (1) wiping the chalice on the inside of the rim as well as on the outside, (2) opening the purificator to its full size so that a clean part of the purificator is used for each communicant (it may be necessary for the minister to use more than one purificator) and (3) turning the chalice so that the next communicant does not drink out of the same place on the cup. Similarly, chalices should be washed with soap and water following each Eucharistic liturgy.

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3 Some have trusted in the fact that the silver or gold in chalices has a weak antiseptic quality, however studies have shown that the effect is too minor to significantly reduce bacterial counts in the wine. Similarly, the concentration of alcohol in wine used at communion has an inadequate antiseptic effect.
6 Anne LaGrange Loving. "Holy Communion and Health—is there a Risk?" Journal of Environmental Health, July-August 1997.
7 Bishop of Huron, Report to the Primate and House of Bishops regarding Cross Contamination via the Common Cup (a report on proceedings of a multidisciplinary consultation in the Diocese of Huron).
It must be pointed out that while the relative risk is low, it is not impossible that infection could be transmitted. This is particularly true of communicants with low resistance to infection, i.e. cancer patients on immunosuppressant therapy, and persons with AIDS. Further examination of alternate Eucharistic practices is therefore warranted.

**Intinction**

Intinction (dipping the bread in the wine) is in use in many Episcopal Church parishes and is increasingly being suggested in Canadian Churches as well. There is, however, real concern that many of the modes of intinction used in parishes do not diminish the threat of infection, and some may actually increase it. Hands, children’s and adult’s, are at least as likely to be a source of infection (often more so) as lips. Retention of the wafer in the hand of the recipient then intincting it means that the wafer, now contaminated by the hand of the recipient, is placed in the wine—thus spreading the infection to it. The use of an intinction chalice would make no difference in this instance.

If a priest retains the wafer, intincts it, and places it on the tongue of the communicant there is the possibility of his/her hand coming in contact with the tongue, and thereafter spreading the contamination.


Editor’s summary note:

- There continues to be no evidence of transmission of the virus that causes AIDS (or Hepatitis B or bacterial Meningitis) by use of a common cup.
- The virus that causes AIDS is destroyed by exposure to air, soap, or any disinfectant.
- Despite centuries of sharing communion from a common cup in the Anglican Church, there is no evidence of increased risk of any infection to Anglican priests who perform the ablutions after everyone else has drunk.
- Nevertheless, use of the proper wiping technique in the administration of the communion cup is of utmost importance for the purposes of hygiene and as a sign of respect for those who share the cup. (See *Communion from the Cup*: a Report by the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy and the National Liturgy Office, CCCB, 1996, p. 8.)
- The risk of infection because of communion by intinction is greater than from drinking from the cup itself.

It would seem that communion under the species of bread only is the best option for those who are at special risk, those who are fearful of infection, and in times when known virulent contagions are about in the community. [1]
From the National Office

Following the 1997 declaration of Saint Therese of Lisieux as a Doctor of the Church, the ecclesiastical authorities in Lisieux have allowed the relics of the saint to be transported to several countries around the world for the purpose of veneration by members of the faithful who hold a particular devotion to her. The National Liturgy Office is pleased to provide these materials, prepared by the National Committee for the Visit to Canada of the Major Reliquary of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus (chaired by Gérald Baril, Associate General Secretary, French Sector, CCCB), to groups and individuals who wish to prepare for the visit or to celebrate in their own locales concurrent with the activities in major centres.

For further information on the visit to Canada of the relics of Saint Therese of Lisieux, check the website of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops <www.cccb.ca>.

Notes on the Visit of the Relics of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

Excerpts from the Apostolic Letter of the Holy Father John Paul II for the proclamation of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus as a Doctor of the Universal Church

On Sunday, October 19, 1997, Pope John Paul II declared Saint Thérèse of Lisieux to be a Doctor of the Church. The following are excerpts from that declaration.

Mother Church rejoices that throughout history the Lord has continued to reveal himself to the little and the humble …

Shining brightly among the little ones to whom the secrets of the kingdom were revealed in a most special way is Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face … During her life Thérèse discovered “new lights, hidden and mysterious meanings” and received from the divine Teacher that “science of love” which she then expressed with particular originality in her writings.

The reception given to the example of her life and Gospel teaching in our century was quick, universal and constant. As if in imitation of her precocious spiritual maturity, her holiness was recognized by the Church in the space of a few years. … The spiritual radiance of Thérèse of the Child Jesus increased in the Church and spread throughout the world…. Her message, often summarized in the so-called “little way,” which is nothing other than the Gospel way of holiness for all, was studied by theologians and experts in spirituality. Cathedrals, basilicas, shrines
and churches throughout the world were built and dedicated to the Lord under the patronage of the Saint of Lisieux. A century after her death, Thérèse of the Child Jesus continues to be recognized as one of the great masters of the spiritual life of our time.

From careful study of the writings of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the resonance they have had in the Church, salient aspects can be noted of her “eminence doctrine,” which is the fundamental element for conferring the title of Doctor of the Church.

First of all, we find a special charism of wisdom. This young Carmelite, without any particular theological training, but illuminated by the light of the Gospel, [has a] teaching [which] not only conforms to Scripture and the Catholic faith, but excels from the depth and wise synthesis it achieved. ...

Thérèse offers a mature synthesis of Christian spirituality: she combines theology and the spiritual life; she expresses herself with strength and authority, with a great ability to persuade and communicate, as is shown by the reception and dissemination of her message among the People of God. ...

In the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux we do not find perhaps, as in other Doctors, a scholarly presentation of the things of God, but we can discern an enlightened witness of faith which ... reveals the mystery and holiness of the Church.

Thus we can rightly recognize in the Saint of Lisieux the charism of a Doctor of the Church, because the gift of the Holy Spirit she received for living and expressing her experience of faith, and because of her particular understanding of the mystery of Christ. ...

With her distinctive doctrine and unmistakable style, Thérèse appears as an authentic teacher of faith and the Christian life. ...

She has made the Gospel shine appealingly to our time; she had the mission of making the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, known and loved; she helped to heal souls of the rigours and fears of Jansenism, which tended to stress God's justice rather than his divine mercy. ...

A particular radiance of doctrine shines forth from her writings which, as if by a charism of the Holy Spirit, grasp the very heart of the message of Revelation in a fresh and original vision, presenting a teaching of eminent quality.

At the core of her message is actually the mystery itself of God-Love, of the Triune God. ... At the summit, as the source and goal, is the merciful love of the three Divine Persons, as she expresses it, especially in her Act of Oblation to Merciful Love. At the root ... is the experience of being the Father’s adoptive children in Jesus. ...

As it was for the Church’s Saints in every age, so also for her, in her spiritual experience Christ is the center and the fullness of Revelation. ...

Thérèse received particular light on the reality of Christ’s Mystical Body, on the variety of charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit, on the eminent power of love, which in a way is the very heart of the Church, where she found her vocation as a contemplative and missionary.

Lastly, among the most original chapters of her spiritual doctrine we must recall Thérèse’s wise delving into the mystery and journey of the Virgin Mary, achieving results very close to the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council in chapter eight of the Constitution Lumen gentium and to what I taught myself in the Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Mater of March 25, 1987.

By her loving concentration on Scripture—she even wanted to learn Hebrew and Greek to understand better the spirit and letter of the sacred books—she showed the importance of the biblical sources in the spiritual life, she emphasized the originality and freshness of the Gospel, she cultivated with moderation...
the spiritual exegesis of the Word of God in both the Old and New Testaments. Thus she discovered hidden treasures, appropriating words and episodes, sometimes with supernatural boldness, as when in reading the texts of Saint Paul, she realized her vocation to love [in the heart of the Church].

Thérèse possesses an exceptional universality. Her person, the Gospel message of the “little way” of trust and spiritual childhood have received and continue to receive a remarkable welcome, which has transcended every border. ...

Moreover, some circumstances contribute to making her designation as a Teacher for the Church of our time even more significant.

First of all, Thérèse is a woman, who in approaching the Gospel knew how to grasp its hidden wealth with that practicality and deep resonance of life and wisdom which belong to the feminine genius. Because of her universality she stands out among the multitude of holy women who are resplendent for their Gospel wisdom.

Thérèse is also a contemplative. In the hiddenness of her Carmel she lived the great adventure of Christian experience to the point of knowing the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ’ love.

Lastly, Thérèse of Lisieux is a young person. ... As such, she appears as a Teacher of evangelical life, particularly effective in illuminating the paths of
young people, who must be the leaders and witnesses of the Gospel to the new generations.

Thérèse of the Child Jesus is not only the youngest Doctor of the Church, but is also the closest to us in time. ...

Thérèse is a Teacher for our time, which thirsts for living and essential words, for heroic and credible acts of witness. For this reason she is also loved and accepted by brothers and sisters of other Christian communities and even by non-Christians.

This year, [1997], when the centenary of the glorious death of Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face is being celebrated, as we prepare to celebrate the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, after receiving a great number of authoritative petitions, especially from many Episcopal Conferences throughout the world, and after accepting the official petition, or Supplex Libellus, addressed to me on March 8, 1997 by the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, as well as from the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and from the Postulator of the same Order, I decided to entrust the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, which has competence in this matter, with the special study of the cause of conferring the title of Doctor of this Saint, “after hearing the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding [her] eminent doctrine.”

Today, October 19, 1997, in Saint Peter’s Square, filled with the faithful from every part of the world, and in the presence of a great many Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, during the solemn Eucharistic celebration I proclaim Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face a Doctor of the Universal Church in these words: “Fulfilling the wishes of many Brothers in the Episcopate and of a great number of the faithful throughout the world, after consulting the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and hearing the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding her eminent doctrine, with certain knowledge and after lengthy reflection, with the fullness of Our apostolic authority We declare Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, virgin, to be a Doctor of the Universal Church. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Life of Saint Thérèse

Marie-Françoise Thérèse Martin was born on January 2, 1873 in Alençon, France—the youngest of nine children, of whom four had already died as infants. Her father was a watchmaker; her mother was a lace maker. Thérèse was a happy little girl deeply loved by her parents and four older sisters: Marie, Pauline, Léonie, and Céline. From her family, she received a deep and dynamic faith. When Thérèse was four and a half, in 1877, her mother (Zélie) died of breast cancer. Thérèse chose her sister Pauline for her “second mother.” Monsieur Martin and his five daughters left Alençon to move to Lisieux so that they could be near Zélie’s sister and her family, the Guérins.

When Thérèse was ten, Pauline entered the Carmel of Lisieux. The shock was so serious for Thérèse that she fell critically
ill with anorexia and hallucinations. On May 13 in 1883, she had a vision in which she saw Our Lady smile at her and was suddenly cured.

Thérèse made her first communion at eleven years of age. Later in her autobiography (Story of Soul), she described it this way:

“It was a kiss of love; I felt I was loved, and I said: ‘I love You, and I give myself to you forever!’ There were no demands made, no struggles, no sacrifices; for a long time now Jesus and poor little Thérèse looked at and understood each other. That day, it was no longer simply a look, it was a fusion; they were no longer two, Thérèse had vanished as a drop of water is lost in the immensity of the ocean. Jesus alone remained” (p. 77).

Even at this age Thérèse was already thinking about becoming a Carmelite nun. Her oldest sister, Marie, entered the Carmel of Lisieux in 1886, however, Thérèse was too young and so hypersensitive that she would cry over nothing: She writes:

“God would have to work a little miracle to make me grow up in an instant, and this miracle He performed on that unforgettable Christmas day [in 1886, when I was 13.] ... On that luminous night... Jesus, the gentle, little Child of only one hour, changed the night of my soul into rays of light. On that night when He made Himself subject to weakness and suffering for love of me, He made me strong and courageous; ... Since that night I have never been defeated in any combat, but rather walked from victory to victory, beginning, so to speak, ‘to run like a giant.’” (p. 97).

Thérèse turned fourteen a few days later. Her new daring helped her conquer every obstacle to entering Carmel on a pilgrimages to Rome begging Pope Leo XIII to let her enter at the age of fifteen. She wanted to love Jesus and to make him greatly loved and to go to Carmel “to save souls and especially to pray for priests.”

As God would have it, Thérèse was indeed able to enter Carmel at fifteen. She was deeply happy to be in the monastery forever and ardently gave herself to community life—and to prayer, which was often a dry experience. It was not unusual for her to fall asleep during her hours of prayer.

Her sanctity was very ordinary: she wanted to do the most she could for everybody; she wanted to do everything with love. Thérèse made fabulous discoveries about the love of Jesus and discovered “the little way of spiritual childhood,” which was living in surrender and confidence with Jesus, who only is Merciful Love.

At the age of 23, in 1896, God let Thérèse experience a terrible spiritual trial, a dark night of faith. All her feelings for God left her, the Lord seemed absent and she had to live on pure faith alone.

Such daring courage transformed the mountains of doubt that often assailed her; she kept her confidence in God through it all. Weakened, then ravaged by tuberculosis, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus died after a terrible agony on the evening of September 30, 1897. She was only 24, a magnificent smile remaining on her face. She had said a few months before her death, “I’m not dying, I’m entering into Life!”
The saints have been traditionally honoured in the Church and their authentic relics and images held in veneration. For the feasts of the saints proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in his servants and display to the faithful fitting example for their imitation" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 111).

Relics in the strict sense, refers to the actual remains of the saints as well as the instruments of a martyr's imprisonment or passion. In the wider sense, it includes objects that have been placed in contact with the body or grave of the saint and thus regarded as significant to the religious sense of believers.

The beginnings of the veneration of relics is found in the respect that the Christian community had for those who had shared in the death of the Lord—first of all, the martyrs. The early Christian community gathered at the tombs of the martyrs to show honour to those who had not only sought to live the gospel, but who had witnessed to it with their blood.

In The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna), one of the oldest authentic accounts of the death of a martyr (ca. 155-57), we read of the faith-filled sensibility of his community:

Then, at last we took up his bones, more precious than costly gems and finer than gold, and put them in a suitable place. The Lord will permit us, when we are able, to assemble there in joy and gladness; and to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already engaged in the contest, and for the practice and training of those who have yet to fight.

That same veneration was extended to the "confessors", those who had given witness to faith without shedding their blood, and then to all those whose witness of holiness was recognized by the various communities.

After Constantine (AD 313) and the end of persecution, churches were built over the graves of the martyrs and eucharist celebrated at their tombs. Eventually, the remains of the martyrs were brought to new churches, often dedicated to their memory and bearing their names. The connection with the tombs of the saints and the altar, as the place of celebration, eventually led to the custom of placing relics of the saints in each altar. (Today this custom continues, though it is not obligatory—with the provision that the relics be truly authentic, of sufficient size, and that they are placed under the altar table, not within it.) It was always however, the altar that was honoured as itself the symbol of the Lord, not because of its relics.

Relics are thus intimately connected with a sense of pilgrimage: the community that has come together, that gathers at the tomb of the saint, to celebrate and rejoice in his/her witness. When it is the relics that are brought to the community, they become a locus of celebration and a temporary place of pilgrimage and veneration.

Relics, then, are a reminder to the community of the holiness of those who have born witness by their lives. They are signs of faith for the Church and a source of strength for each community that bears prayerful witness. God's mighty deeds are shown forth in the lives of the saints; their remains are precious because of the excellence of that witness. These men and women "were living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and one day will be glorified by him to eternal life" (Council of Trent: D 985).

Kenneth Pearce is a presbyter of the archdiocese of Toronto.
The visit of the relics of Saint Thérèse invites the local Christian community to go on pilgrimage to her tomb, to reflect on the witness of her life, and to commit ourselves to reflect that witness in our own lives.

**Suggested Liturgical Texts**

**Presidential Prayers**

**Collects**

For collect prayers of the mass, see Sacramentary p. 760.

**Preface**

Father, all powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.
You reveal the secrets of your kingdom
to those who become like little children.
Among them, you chose Saint Thérèse, hidden in Christ,
to proclaim the good news of your merciful love.
Your Holy Spirit moved her
to make her life a loving oblation
of prayer and self-denial
for the salvation of all humanity
through Christ and his Church.

Now with all the saints and all the angels,
we praise you for ever:

Holy, holy, holy ...

**Solemn Blessing**

Christ Jesus revealed to Saint Thérèse
the mysteries of his childhood,
and led her by the way of simplicity and confidence.
May he grant you childlike trust
in the Father's merciful love.
Amen.

In his passion Christ unveiled to her
the secrets of his holy face.
May he lead you to offer all your sufferings
in union with his own.
Amen.

By teaching Saint Thérèse to offer herself
for God's kingdom on earth,
Christ brought her to share
his glory in heaven.
May he give you her apostolic spirit,
and bring you all to eternal joy.
Amen

May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.
Readings
Option I: Memorial of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus
First Reading: Isaiah 66.10-14c
Weekday Lectionary 737(20)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103.1-2, 8-9, 17-18, Weekday
Lectionary 739 (6)
or Psalm 131.1-2, 3a
Lectionary 739 (9)
Second Reading: 1 John 4.7-16
Weekday Lectionary 740 (17)
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11.25
Weekday Lectionary 741 (4)
Gospel: Matthew 11.25-30
Weekday Lectionary 742 (4)
or Matthew 18.1-5
Lectionary 742 (7)
Option II: God Our Father
First Reading: Hosea 11.1, 3-5b, 8c-9
Weekday Lectionary 386
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103.1-2, 3-4, 10-11, 12-13
Second Reading: Ephesians 3.8-12, 14-19
Sunday Lectionary 171
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 11.25
Weekday Lectionary 741 (4)
Weekday Lectionary 463 (abbreviated)
Option III: Poor and Little
First Reading: Sirach 3.17-18, 21, 29-30
Weekday Lectionary 779 (13)
Weekday Lectionary 709 (5)
Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 12.7-10
Sunday Lectionary 101
Gospel: Luke 18.9-14
Weekday Lectionary 242

Sample Prayers of the Faithful
A choice should be made among the following intercessions, some of which were used in the Prayers of the Faithful at the Basilica of Saint Thérèse in Lisieux during the centenary year of her death (1996-1997).

Ideally two readers would take part in these prayers: one would read the quotation from Saint Thérèse, and another would read the intercession. However, one reader alone would suffice. The quotations may also be omitted.

These intercessions may also be adapted for use at the Liturgy of the Hours.

Presider's Introduction
Inspired by Saint Thérèse's childlike confidence, let us offer our prayers to God our loving Father:

Petitions
1) “I want to be a daughter of the Church and pray for the Holy Father's intentions, which I know embrace the whole universe.”
   For our Holy Father Pope John Paul, our Bishop N., and all the leaders of our Church, that we may be one in God's love, we pray to the Lord.

2) “My vocation, at last I have found it! In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be loved.”
   That through the intercession of Saint Thérèse we may all have a deep love for the Church, we pray to the Lord:

3) “I would like to preach the Gospel on all five continents and be a missionary until the consummation of the ages.”
   That during the pilgrimage of her relics around the world, Saint Thérèse may lead our country and all nations closer to God, we pray to the Lord:

4) “I have never sought anything but the Truth.”
   For all those responsible for our political and social welfare, that they may work for true human values and the benefit of all, we pray to the Lord:

5) “God gave me parents more worthy of heaven than earth.”
   For all our families, that we may seek to build up the world through love, we pray to the Lord:
6) “When I consider Jesus, how small my heart seems! I would like to love him so much! I would like to love him more than he has ever been loved!”
That Saint Thérèse may inspire all to knowledge and love of God and closer union to Christ Jesus, we pray to the Lord:

7) “What pleases God is to see me loving my littleness and my poverty, and the blind hope that I have in His mercy.”
For a great confidence in God’s goodness so that our weakness may be transformed into the strength to love and act as he wills, we pray to the Lord:

8) “I came to Carmel to save souls, and especially to pray for priests.”
That all those searching for meaning in life may find it in prayer and sacrifice for others, we pray to the Lord:

9) “The chalice of suffering is full to the brim, but I do not regret having surrendered myself to Love.”
That all the suffering may learn from Saint Thérèse not to count on themselves, but to have complete confidence in Jesus, we pray to the Lord:

10) “I see that God alone is changeable, and he alone can fulfill my immense desires.”
That during the visit of Saint Thérèse’s relics to our country [parish], many young people may be inspired to give their lives to God and his Church in a total gift of love, we pray to the Lord:

**Presider’s Conclusion**
God of infinite merciful love, grant all these petitions that we offer in the presence of the relics of Saint Thérèse. Inspired by her love, may we too love you and make you greatly loved. We make these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**Itinerary for the Relics of Saint Thérèse**
**September 17 to December 14, 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Arrival</th>
<th>Departure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Mon. Sept. 17, 2 PM</td>
<td>Thurs. Sept. 20, 2 PM</td>
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<td>Thurs. Sept. 20, 7 PM</td>
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<td>St Therese Point</td>
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The Western Conference for Liturgy is composed of dioceses in the western provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, along with the territories of Yukon, the Northwest and Nunavut. The conference meets yearly and remains a consultative body for the bishops of the Western Catholic Conference.

The year 2000 saw representatives gather in Calgary for the annual conference and presentation. The keynote speaker was Sr. Theresa Koernke from Washington Theological Union. She spoke on the lived reality of liturgy in the lives of all people and touched on the topics of: liturgy as a transforming process, the spiritual components of liturgy, the commissioning of the people as disciples, and the call to be living Eucharist to one another. These well-prepared presentations by such a well-informed speaker were appreciated by all who were in attendance.

In 2001 the Western Conference will be meeting as part of the National Liturgy Meeting in Halifax in November. In 2002 the annual conference will be held in Prince George, BC and in 2003 the Western Conference will be meeting as part of the Liturgy Symposium being proposed for Winnipeg.

One of the most energetically supported ventures of the Western Conference is the Summer School of Liturgical Studies that is held each year at the Newman Centre in Edmonton. This program has continued to advance the renewal of liturgical reform in Western Canada through its extensive offering of classes each year. Classes are offered by a wide-ranging group of lecturers and presenters, and are open to both lay and ordained. As the demands on the ordained leaders in the Church continue to grow, it becomes more and more important that lay people step forward and assume some responsibility in ministering in parishes and dioceses. Liturgy and liturgical education remains an important aspect of the formation of all people. The life-giving worship of our communities in Western Canada has been greatly nourished by the work of the Summer School. The Summer School has continued to graduate individuals for leadership in the Church in all areas of the western region. The Western Conference continues to encourage the dioceses to take advantage of the formation offered each year by the Summer School.

Another area of concern for the Western Conference has been the ongoing effect of the Mississauga Statement. For the past two years the Western Conference has encouraged all of its member dioceses to discuss, at both a diocesan and parish level, the main points from the 1994 statement. This prophetic statement clearly enunciates the importance of formation in the areas of liturgy and presidential style for candidates to the priesthood, but it is also an invitation to begin a process of education for all people in the areas of liturgical renewal. To this end, the Western Conference continues to aid dioceses in discussion and study of the document, and to receive feedback from those who have spent time in dialogue with the document. It will remain on the yearly agenda of the conference for years to come.

Throughout the coming year the conference will be assisting the member dioceses in formulating guidelines and norms for eucharistic adoration. It is hoped that such guidelines will aid dioceses and parishes in establishing an appropriate ritual for eucharistic devotions, which are becoming increasingly more popular in many areas of the western region.

For further information contact:

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MACKLIN SK S0L 2C0
Phone: 306-753-2063
Fax: 306-753-2691
Brief Book Reviews

Murray Kroetsch

- **The Liturgy Committee Handbook**, by Thomas Baker and Frank Ferrone, (Mystic CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998); 112 pp., $14.95 US.

This book is a completely revised and expanded edition of *Liturgy Committee Basics* published in 1985 by Pastoral Press. In this new book, the authors explore issues related to the nature of a liturgy committee, membership, and the range of possible agenda items that ought to concern parish liturgy committees. The authors offer excellent ideas for the effective functioning of a parish liturgy committee. The application of some of their insights from the corporate management world will be helpful to parish committees who experience uncertainty regarding their role or conflict in carrying out their tasks. This book is recommended as an excellent guide for parish communities engaged in the establishment of a liturgy committee.


Written by an experienced liturgical musician and composer, this book provides pastoral musicians with a wealth of information. Haas offers a detailed overview of each element of the Order of Mass along with his personal observations about the role of the music minister and the effective celebration of various ritual actions. What distinguishes this work from other commentaries on the mass is the background documentation that the author provides before his discussion of each ritual element. He has assembled an impressive collection of scriptural texts, excerpts from official Church documents and quotations from ancient and contemporary theologians relative to each part of the mass. While this book is primarily intended for pastoral musicians, it is recommended as a useful resource for study and reflection by liturgy committees, presiders and other ministers.

- **Liturgy With Style and Grace**, by Gabe Huck and Gerald T. Chinchar, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998); 133 pp., $12.00 US.

This revised and updated third edition of an earlier work provides the reader with a comprehensive introduction to the elements of liturgical celebration. In a series of brief two-page articles, the authors discuss foundational liturgical principles, the elements of liturgy (words, sounds, gestures, places and objects), the assembly and various liturgical ministries, the Order of Mass, liturgical feasts and seasons, and the principle sacramental rites of the Church. Helpful quotations and discussion questions accompany each article. This book is highly recommended as a foundational text for those who are beginning to study the liturgy and those who are interested in how all the elements of liturgical celebration are connected.

- **Meaningful First Communion Liturgies**, by Nick Wagner, (San Jose, California: Resource Publications, Inc., 1998); 121 pp., $21.95 US.

Those who are looking for a recipe book filled with new creative ways to bring life to first communion liturgies will be disappointed with the work. The author does not propose any clever gimmicks designed

Murray Kroetsch, pastor of St. Dominic's Parish in Oakville, ON, also works in the Office of Liturgy of the diocese of Hamilton. He is currently chair of the Ontario Liturgical Conference.
to make these liturgies attractive. Rather, he invites those responsible for preparing first communion liturgies to be attentive to ensuring the active participation of the assembly, the primacy of the word and eucharist, and the consequent mission of those who celebrate the eucharist. Wagner discusses each part of the mass and suggests ways for liturgy planners, the assembly, first communion families and candidates to prepare for the celebration. Finally, he identifies how this book can be used in conjunction with several catechetical resources published in the United States. This book is recommended as background reading for anyone engaged in the preparation of children and their families for first communion.


This resource for preparing for Sunday eucharist is one of the best published to date. The authors' treatment of each Sunday includes the complete lectionary texts, thoughtful reflections on the gospel for each week and its implications for living the paschal mystery, helpful suggestions for those who proclaim the gospel, suggestions for celebration (including model texts for the introductory rite and general intercessions), and catechesis for music ministers and liturgy committees. A side bar for each Sunday includes questions for faith sharing to assist individuals or groups in their weekly preparation for the Sunday eucharist and reflection questions for each of the liturgical ministers. Those who are currently using this resource are undoubtedly looking forward to the next edition for the Sundays and solemnities in 2001. Highly recommended.


This book provides the reader with a step-by-step comprehensive overview of the Order of Mass. Each section of the book in turn examines one of the structural elements of the mass and includes significant quotations from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal followed by pastoral commentary. The layout of the commentary, with its clear headings, makes this a user-friendly resource for those who are looking for answers to specific questions regarding the celebration of the eucharist. A list of recommended readings concludes each section; an excellent select bibliography is found at the end of the book. This very practical book is recommended as a basic reference for liturgy preparation teams and catechists. Initiation teams would find this a helpful reference book when presented with questions about the way we celebrate the Sunday eucharist.

- A Caregiver's Companion: Ministering to Older Adults, by J. Daniel Dymski, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1997); 189 pp., $8.95 US.

This pocket-size book is a handy guide for those who minister to the elderly. The author offers an initial reflection on the pastoral care of the elderly and clearly articulates the ministry skills necessary for pastoral caregivers. Drawing on his own extensive pastoral experience with the elderly, Dymski offers reflections on a number of special needs that are particular to senior citizens, including how to deal with death, dying and bereavement. Finally, he offers helpful suggestions for praying with older adults. A selection of devotional prayers as well as the Rite for Distributing Communion outside Mass is included in this section of the book. The practical information contained will be especially useful for those who are being formed as pastoral caregivers to the elderly.

- Your Child's Baptism, by Paul Turner, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999); 44 pp., $5.00 US.

This small booklet offers a series of con-
cise and pastorally sensitive reflections on frequently asked questions about the baptism of children, the qualifications and the role of godparents, as well as a comprehensive explanation of the Rite of Baptism for Children. Thoughtful reflections are offered concerning the nurturing of faith in the home and parish community following baptism. At the conclusion of the booklet are selections from the Rite of Baptism for Children, the Code of Canon Law and other resources. Baptism preparation teams will find this well-written booklet an excellent resource for their own formation. It is highly recommended for distribution to parents who are preparing for their child’s baptism.

- **Guide for Ministers of Communion**, by Victoria M. Tufano, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999); 57 pp., $5.00 US.

Part of Liturgy Training Publications’ Basics of Ministry series, this booklet is an excellent resource for those beginning their formation as ministers of the Eucharist. Tufano provides a brief historical and theological background to this ministry and offers a series of thoughtful reflections on four qualities of a minister of communion: humility, hospitality, gratitude and reverence. She addresses a number of practical aspects of this ministry during mass and with the sick and homebound, and offers sound pastoral responses to many of the questions that are usually posed by new eucharistic ministers. The rite for bringing communion to the sick is included (in English and Spanish) at the end of the booklet. This is one of the best introductory booklets available for new eucharistic ministers. It ought to be required reading for every new eucharistic minister.

- **Guide to the Revised Lectionary**, by Martin Connell, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998); 70 pp., $5.00 US.

Martin Connell traces the development of the lectionary from apostolic times to the present. Included in his historical overview is a complete listing of the texts found in the one-year cycle of readings used before Vatican II, and the complete listing of readings found in our present three-year lectionary for Sundays. He also discusses the structure and theology of the lectionary and its relationship to the liturgical year. Finally, Connell invites the reader to consider the ecumenical impact of the Roman lectionary and possibilities for Christian unity in view of the development of the Revised Common Lectionary.

This booklet is a gem. It provides a comprehensive history of the development of the lectionary and its structure that is accessible to ministers of the word. It is highly recommended as a foundational text for all who are called to proclaim God’s word in the liturgical assembly—laity and clergy alike.
Brief Book Reviews


This is a revised edition of A Catechumen's Lectionary, edited by Robert Hamma. The present work includes much of the same material as the earlier work: the reflections on the readings, guides to prayer and journal writing. What is new in this edition is the inclusion of revisions that have been made to the lectionary since the publication of the earlier work and the invitation to the reader to explore the scripture texts in a variety of available translations.

Like its predecessor, this book is recommended for use by catechumens and those who accompany them, for ministers of the word and those who preach God's word each Sunday.

• Signatures of Grace: Catholic Writers on the Sacraments, edited by Thomas Grady and Paula Huston, (New York: Dutton, 2000); 237 pp., $33.99 CAN.

A series of refreshing essays on each of the Christian sacraments is offered by American Catholic writers. This collection is unique because of the personal anecdotes and perspectives on the history and theology of each of the sacraments. Each essay connects the outward signs and ritual actions with the writer's aesthetic experience of one of the sacraments. The reader will find much to ponder in each sacramental testimony in this collection. Highly recommended for those who wish to explore how the sacraments actually touch the souls of believers.

• The Mystery and Meaning of the Mass, by Joseph M. Champlin, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999); 126 pp., $9.95 US.

This popular guide to the celebration of the mass begins with some brief testimonies from people who have come to recognize the eucharist as the centre of the Christian life. In the first part of this book, the author identifies some of the changeless and changeable elements of the mass and discusses briefly the liturgical reform initiatives of the Second Vatican Council. In the second part of the book, Champlin leads the reader through an explanation of the parts of the mass with some basic historical background and occasionally a comment regarding changes that have yet to be fully implemented in some parishes.

The simple and straightforward style of this book is typical of Champlin. It is recommended for the person who wants a very elementary but clear understanding of the way we celebrate the eucharist each Sunday. A good book to include on the parish pamphlet rack.

• Sacraments: A New Understanding for a New Generation, by Ray R. Noll, Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999); 189 pp. plus CD-ROM, $24.95 US.

This book is written for a young adult audience and seeks to familiarize them with the most current thinking on the theology of the sacraments. The initial chapters deal with essential sacramental concepts, the ministry of Jesus, and the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Subsequent chapters offer an overview of each of the seven sacraments. The presentation on each sacrament is clearly written and concludes with a review, discussion questions, some possible projects, a glossary of terms and suggested further reading. Finally, a CD-ROM disc containing excerpted texts from respected sacramental and liturgical theologians accompanies the book.

This book is arranged like a course syllabus for college students. However, it would be a valuable resource for anyone engaged in adult faith formation. It is also recommended as good background reading for initiation teams.

• A User-Friendly Parish, by Judith Ann Kollar, (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998); 65 pp., $7.95 US.
The author of this small book invites parishes to be intentional about how they welcome people to their communities. Kollar suggests that attention to detail, effective communication, and outreach are among the important means to create a welcoming parish. She offers a series of common sense reflections and discussion questions—almost like an examination of conscience—for parish staffs, councils and members. Recommended for consideration especially by parish councils and pastoral staff members.

Christian Sacraments in A Postmodern World: A Theology for the Third Millennium, by Kenan B. Osborne, OFM, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999); 249 pp., $18.95 US.

This book on sacramental theology is both insightful and challenging. Writing with his usual clarity, Osborne provides a comprehensive survey of the developments in sacramental thought up to, and including, the twentieth century. He offers several methodologies for approaching an understanding of the sacraments and critiques them in view of contemporary philosophical thought. This book is intended for the serious student and will require a careful reading. Recommended.


This book is aptly described as a worship resource. It is not a hymnal. Nor is it a liturgy preparation guide or a prayer book. It is a bit of all three. Designed to meet the needs of teens and young adults, the editors of this collection provide a large collection of contemporary music for liturgical celebrations and other occasions of prayer with young people. The Order of Mass, an outline for Reconciliation, and an adapted format for morning and evening prayer are included. These are accompanied by helpful notes for those who prepare these liturgical celebrations. A varied selection of prayers for special occasions and circumstances are scattered throughout the book.

Most of the music in this collection has been written in the last five years and therefore is not likely part of the existing repertoire of most parishes or school communities. However, there are some fine new settings—especially among the psalms and canticles, which ought to be considered for use especially in communities with a large number of young people. This book is recommended as a supplement to whatever musical resource is presently used in parish and school communities.

By Flowing Waters: Chant for the Liturgy, by Paul A. Ford, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999); 512 pp., $19.95 US.

Paul Ford has made a significant contribution to the promotion of the sung liturgy in English. He has compiled almost 700 chants and songs based on authentic chants for use by assemblies, cantors and choirs in English-speaking communities. Included in the collection are the entire repertory of the Simple Gradual, Jubilate Deo (the universal chant collection authorized by Pope Paul VI in 1974), and the chants for the Order of Mass. Many of the melodies have been wedded to fresh English texts to make them more accessible to today’s assemblies.

This book is an excellent resource for those who wish to “sing” the liturgy and not merely sing during the liturgy. It will provide a challenge to musicians and communities unfamiliar with chant, but will undoubtedly enrich their music making at the same time. Recommended for all pastoral musicians.
Announcing the
National Meeting of Diocesan Directors and Chairpersons of Liturgy Commissions

Theme: Initiating Adults: Present Realities & Future Challenges
Dates: November 12-15, 2001
Place: Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse, Halifax, NS

Facilitators: Sr. Sheila O'Dea and Mr. Jim Schellman, North American FORUM on the Catechumenate
For further information please contact Dorothy Riopelle, National Liturgy Office, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1N 7B1
Phone: 613-241-9461 Ext. 276, Fax: 613-241-9048; E-mail: riopelle@cccb.ca

Initiating Adults: Present Realities and Future Challenges

is the focus of the National Meeting of Diocesan Directors and Chairpersons of Liturgy Commissions to be held at Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse, Halifax, NS, beginning on Monday, November 12 and concluding on Thursday, November 15, 2001.

As some of you will not be able to join us for the meeting, we would invite your input on how the RCIA is being implemented in your parish/diocese. We want to HEAR from you. Please fill out the following questionnaire and return it to the National Liturgy Office at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your assistance.

1. Who has responsibility for leadership in the implementation of the rite in your diocese?

2. What are the most frequently asked questions your office/committee receives with regard to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults?

3. What problems/aberrations in implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults do you see as you travel throughout your diocese?

4. What percentage of parishes in your diocese are following the rite conscientiously, diligently, energetically? ______ with some enthusiasm? ______ somewhat? ______ not at all? ______

5. What do you see as the greatest need in your diocese in the area of implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults? Do you have any thoughts on addressing this need?
Your Turn

Got something to say about the National Bulletin on Liturgy? Topics you think people need help with? Ideas for helpful things we could put in the Bulletin? Let us know how we can be more helpful. Just copy the form below or use your own stationery to send us your thoughts about this or any other issue of the Bulletin or just about the Bulletin in general.

National Liturgy Office
90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1N 7B1

About This Issue
Which articles did you find most helpful or informative?

Which were neither?

What do you think should have been included and wasn’t?

Would you recommend this issue of the Bulletin to others?

About Bulletin #

Which articles did you find most helpful or informative?

Which were neither?

What do you think should have been included and wasn’t?

Would you recommend this issue of the Bulletin to others?

About the Bulletin in General

Which issues of the Bulletin have you found most helpful or informative?

Which were neither?

What topics should we address in future issues? (Be as specific as you can about questions and areas of concern.)

Any other ideas about what might be helpful to readers?

The more we know about our readers, the more we can serve their needs. We would appreciate it if you would provide the following information:

Reader Information
What, if any, is your involvement in liturgical ministry?

Describe your pastoral situation:
- parish, diocesan, religious community, other?
- size of above community?
- rural or urban?
- Sunday worship led by priest?
- frequency of Sunday worship without a priest?

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