

Reconciliation – Additional Information

Why is there a sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?

Since the new life of grace received in Baptism does not abolish the weakness of human nature nor the inclination to sin (that is, concupiscence), Christ instituted this sacrament for the conversion of the baptized who have been separated from him by sin.

When did he institute this sacrament?

The risen Lord instituted this sacrament on the evening of Easter when he showed himself to his apostles and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:22-23).

Do the baptized have need of conversion?

The call of Christ to conversion continues to resound in the lives of the baptized. Conversion is a continuing obligation for the whole Church. She is holy but includes sinners in her midst.

What are the essential elements of the sacrament of Reconciliation?

The essential elements are two: the acts of the penitent who comes to repentance through the action of the Holy Spirit, and the absolution of the priest who in the name of Christ grants forgiveness and determines the ways of making satisfaction.

Who is the minister of this sacrament?

Christ has entrusted the ministry of Reconciliation to his apostles, to the bishops who are their successors and to the priests who are the collaborators of the bishops, all of whom become thereby instruments of the mercy and justice of God. They exercise their power of forgiving sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Is a confessor bound to secrecy?

Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to people every confessor, without any exception and under very severe penalties, is bound to maintain "the sacramental seal" which means absolute secrecy about the sins revealed to him in confession.

What are the effects of this sacrament?

The effects of the sacrament of Penance are: reconciliation with God and therefore the forgiveness of sins; reconciliation with the Church; recovery, if it has been lost, of the state of grace; remission of the eternal punishment merited by mortal sins, and remission, at least in part, of the temporal punishment which is the consequence of sin; peace, serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation; and an increase of spiritual strength for the struggle of Christian living.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, questions 297-299, 302, 307, 309-310