

Session 4



PENANCE AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK GOD'S MERCY REVEALED

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God's Mercy Revealed

INTRODUCTION

We are all in need of healing. Some of us may need physical or emotional healing, but all of us need spiritual healing. St. Paul says in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

God knows that we cannot make amends for our sins on our own. That is the fundamental reason that he sent Jesus—to save us from our sins. But in our everyday life, we often “fall short.” For that reason, God has provided us with two sacraments designed especially for healing: the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

In the Sacrament of Penance, we obtain God's pardon for our sins, and, at the same time, we are reconciled to the Church and God's people. Through this sacrament, we receive the spiritual healing we all need.

At times, however, we may also benefit from the second sacrament of healing—the Anointing of the Sick. In this sacrament, a baptized person who is in danger of death because of illness or old age receives strength, courage, and peace to endure their suffering, and the forgiveness of sins if the person is not able to receive the Sacrament of Penance. The sacrament also can bring restoration of health, if it is conducive to the person's salvation, and it prepares them for passing to eternal life.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Why Penance is such an important part of the Catholic Faith**
- **Why we confess our sins to a priest**
- **A step-by-step guide to the reception of the Sacrament of Penance**
- **The benefits and graces of frequent Confession**
- **And finally, a look at the other sacrament of healing—The Anointing of the Sick**



OPENING PRAYER

Lord, you invite all who are burdened to come to you.
Allow your healing hand to heal me.
Touch my soul with your compassion for others.
Touch my heart with your
courage and infinite love for all.
Touch my mind with your wisdom,
that my mouth may always
proclaim your praise.
Teach me to reach out to
you in my need,
and help me to lead others to
you by my example.
Most loving heart of Jesus,
bring me health in body and spirit
that I may serve you with
all my strength.
Touch gently this life
which you have created, now and forever. Amen.

—www.ourcatholicfaith.org

“But if a person, whether a layperson, priest or sister, goes to confession and converts, the Lord forgives. And when the Lord forgives, he forgets.”

—Pope Francis



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus so that we are not susceptible to sin?
2. According to the presenters, what are the effects of the Sacrament of Penance?
3. What is keeping you from encountering Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance more often?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

#1 Recall the Gospel story of the woman caught in adultery and the story of the prodigal son. What do these stories reveal about God's mercy and his desire to forgive and heal you?

#2 Read and reflect on the following message from Pope Francis to the General Audience at St. Peter's Square (2/19/14):

"One might say: I confess only to God. Yes, you can say to God 'forgive me' and say your sins, but our sins are also committed against the brethren, and against the Church. That is why it is necessary to ask pardon of the Church, and of the brethren in the person of the priest. 'But Father, I am ashamed' Shame is also good, it is healthy to feel a little shame, because being ashamed is salutary. When a person feels no shame, in my country we say that he is 'shameless'; 'sin vergüenza.' But shame too does good, because it makes us more humble, and the priest receives this confession with love and tenderness and forgives us on God's behalf. Also from a human point of view, in order to unburden oneself, it is good to talk with a brother and tell the priest these things which are weighing so much on my heart. And one feels that one is unburdening oneself before God, with the Church, with his brother. Do not be afraid of Confession! When one is in line to go to Confession, one feels all these things, even shame, but then when one finishes Confession one leaves free, grand, beautiful, forgiven, candid, happy. This is the beauty of Confession!"

#3 What is keeping you from encountering Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance? Is there something that you need to confess in order to be "restored to health"? Remember what Pope St. John Paul II said:

"Confession is an act of honesty and courage—an act of entrusting ourselves, beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and forgiving God."

Examination of Conscience Based on the Ten Commandments

1. I am the LORD your God. You shall have no false gods before me.

Do I put God before my spouse? My children?
My work?
Do I believe that God loves me?
Do I have any “false gods” in my life like money, fame, power, or possessions?
Have I been involved in fortune-telling, astrology, palm-reading or witchcraft?
Do I pray daily?

2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Do I use curse words?
Have I made oaths or sworn promises to God that I haven't kept?
Have I allowed others to swear in my presence?

3. Remember to keep holy the LORD's Day.

Do I attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation?
Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sundays?
Do I avoid unnecessary shopping on Sundays?

4. Honor your father and mother.

Do I show love to my parents, regardless of their age?
Do I help them when I can?
Do I respect my employer and others in authority?
If I am a parent, have I given a bad example in word or deed to my children?
Am I raising my children in the Catholic Faith?

5. You shall not kill.

Have I killed or seriously injured anyone?
Do I gossip?
Have I had an abortion or helped someone get an abortion?
Have I lost my temper, given into anger, or harbored resentment against my neighbor?
Do I bear grudges?
Have I ever harmed anyone physically, mentally or emotionally?
Do I take care of the environment?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

Have I used pornography?
Have I watched movies that are overly violent or sexual?
Have I consented to lustful thoughts?
Have I masturbated?
Have I had premarital sex?
Have I treated anyone as an object, rather than a person?
Do I eat or drink in excess?
Have I lost sobriety through drunkenness or drug use?

7. You shall not steal.

Have I stolen anything?
Do I always give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
Do I cheat in school or in business?
Am I fair in paying my employees?
Am I honest in paying my taxes?
Have I wasted time?
Have I been generous in serving the poor?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I told a lie, even a white lie?
Have I told lies to avoid getting in trouble?
Have I revealed other people's secrets?
Have I failed to mind my own business?
Have I accused someone falsely?
Have I judged others harshly?
Have I been prejudiced or discriminated against anyone?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I been unfaithful to my spouse in either my actions or my thoughts?
Have I used my wife or husband merely to satisfy my sexual urges?
Have I acted inappropriately with those of the opposite sex?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's property.

Have I envied anyone else's possessions, money, fame, or success?
Have I used more than my fair share of resources?



CLOSING PRAYER

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

—Psalm 32:1