

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Penance, was instituted by Jesus Christ on the evening of the first Easter Day when He gave His Disciples the power to forgive sins.

On the even of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, 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."

St John 20.19-23

For 2,000 years the historic Catholic church has taught that the power of Absolution is one of the parts of Christ's ministry that was conferred upon and is continued by Bishops and Priests validly ordained in the Apostolic Succession.

Like all the seven Sacraments, Reconciliation is a gift of strengthening grace given to us by God the Father, through the Son, by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. As early as the A.D. 200's the Sacrament of Reconciliation was known as "Baptism after Baptism." Whenever we receive Reconciliation we are restored to the status we had immediately after our Baptism. Reconciliation is as joyous an event as Baptism.

During some periods in the history of the Church it was necessary to receive the Church's ministrations from the Priest of one's geographic parish. That was never the case, however, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each person has the right—and indeed the obligation—to choose very carefully one's confessor (the Priest administering the Sacrament—either at the scheduled time each month or by appointment—they are also happy to recommend other confessors, either here in the diocese or in religious communities. Spiritual directors also can often be very helpful in choosing a confessor.

Before the 1960's in the Western Church the Sacrament of Reconciliation was most often administered in booth-like compartments called "confessionals" generally located near the narthex of the church. Since the liturgical renewal of the 1960's and 1970's confessionals in most churches have been replaced by Reconciliation chapels in which the Sacrament can be administered in both Rite I (traditional/Medieval) and Rite II (contemporary/Early Christian) forms, as the penitent (the person receiving the Sacrament) chooses.

At St Paul's the Reconciliation chapel is located to the right of the Central Altar just beyond the Holy Family shrine. Originally the Sacristy of the 1883 Jenney church, this small oratory now provides a comfortable, air conditioned, securely private, soundproof sacred space for Reconciliation as well as for individual prayer and meditation. Like the rest of the church-proper, it is available to parishioners 24 hours a day.