The Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Meaning of a Good Confession

Scripture teaches: *"When a man or woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person is guilty, he shall confess his sin which he has committed; and he shall make full restitution for his wrong"* (Nm 5:6–7). Likewise, *"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects"* (Jas 5:16).

To make a **good confession** is to approach the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation with proper disposition: a complete and humble admission of sins, sincere contrition, a firm resolution to avoid sin in the future, and the willingness to carry out the assigned penance. Contrition—"sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again" (CCC 1451)—is essential.

Contrition may be **perfect**, arising from pure love of God, or **imperfect**, arising from fear of punishment. Both dispose us to receive sacramental absolution when confessed sincerely (cf. CCC 1452). The grace of the sacrament flows from Christ's mercy, but its fruitfulness depends on the openness of the penitent's heart.

Preparing for Confession

A good confession is aided by a thorough **examination of conscience**, in which the penitent prayerfully reflects on thoughts, words, actions, and omissions since the last confession. The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and traditional guides of examination can help identify where we have failed to love God and neighbor (cf. CCC 1454–1455).

Mortal sins must be confessed in kind and number as soon as possible (cf. CCC 1456). Yet the Church strongly encourages the confession of venial sins as well, since regular confession forms the conscience, strengthens virtue, and combats the effects of concupiscence (cf. CCC 1457–1458).

The Effects of the Sacrament

When celebrated worthily, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation brings powerful spiritual effects:

- **Forgiveness of sins:** Restores us to God's grace and reconciles us with Him (cf. CCC 1468).

- **Reconciliation with the Church:** Heals the breach caused by sin and restores unity with the Body of Christ (cf. CCC 1469).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Contd)

The Effects of a Good Confession

- **Peace and consolation:** Brings inner peace, serenity, and spiritual strength (cf. CCC 1468).

- **Strength for the Christian life:** Increases spiritual resilience against future sin and temptation (cf. CCC 1496).

- **Penance and restitution:** Assignments of prayer, works of mercy, or acts of self-denial, along with restitution where possible (e.g., returning stolen goods, repairing reputations), complete the sacramental act of satisfaction (cf. CCC 1459–1460).

Catechism Summary

> "The reception of this sacrament consists in the penitent's acts of contrition, confession, and satisfaction, and the priest's absolution. The penitent, placing himself before the merciful judgment of God, confesses his sins to the priest, feels true sorrow for having offended God, and firmly resolves to amend his life. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, absolves him from his sins and, in the name of Christ, imposes a suitable penance" (CCC 1450).

Pastoral Reflection

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not a burden but a gift. In it, we encounter Christ the Divine Physician, who heals our wounds and restores us to the joy of discipleship. A good confession is not merely about listing faults—it is about turning back to the Father, like the prodigal son, and being embraced by His mercy. Frequent confession allows us to grow steadily in holiness, to experience deeper peace, and to walk more closely with Christ in daily life.
