

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

April 21, 2024

Newsletter no. 214

As part of our series of newsletters devoted to the sacrament of reconciliation (otherwise known as confession or penance), we looked most recently at what the Code of Canon Law has to say about this sacrament. In last week's newsletter we discussed canons 959 and 981, which touch upon the four main components of reconciliation—the confession of one's sins to a priest, an expression of sorrow for those sins on the part of the penitent, the imposition of a penance by the priest that is to be performed by the penitent, and the imparting of absolution by the priest for the sins that were committed. Other canons tell us more about this sacrament and its proper celebration.

Canon 960 says: "Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful, conscious of grave sin, is reconciled with God and the Church. Only physical or moral impossibility excuses from confession of this type; in such a case reconciliation can be obtained by other means." "Individual," of course, means "by oneself," and "integral" means that the confession of one's mortal sins must be complete, omitting neither what kind they are nor how many times they have been committed. ("Integral" doesn't apply to one's venial sins; it is desirable to confess all of them as well as possible, but it isn't absolutely necessary, as canon 988,2 indicates.) A physical impossibility that would excuse a person from confessing his sins might be, for example, a disability that keeps someone housebound, or a difficult journey that would be required to get to a priest, while a moral impossibility might be some kind of psychological problem that would prevent a person from being able to confess his sins even if a priest were available.

The term "ordinary means" implies that there are other ways of obtaining reconciliation with God and the Church, as canon 960 suggests when it refers to "other means." And so the next three canons (nos. 961-963) discuss those other means. They are what is known as general reconciliation or general absolution. In a general reconciliation, many people are absolved of their sins simultaneously without their making individual confessions. The need for this would arise when there would be a large number of people wanting to confess their sins and not enough priests to hear their confessions, or when a number of people find themselves caught in an emergency situation, when a priest was present, and there is no time for anyone to confess his or her sins. In the latter case, if people were trapped on a sinking ship, for instance, and a priest were present, he could simply say the words of absolution over the trapped people, and that would be sufficient. However, canons 962 and 963 make it clear that those who receive general absolution must not only have the same sense of contrition as those who confess their sins individually in a non-emergency situation; they must also eventually make an individual confession as soon as they are able if, for example, they have survived the sinking ship.

But when someone is utterly hindered by a physical or moral impossibility of confessing his sins, because, for example, he is stranded alone on a desert island or is suffering from severe dementia—what then? The Church has always understood that in such circumstances God's mercy will prevail if a person is truly sorry for his sins to the extent that he can be, even if dementia or some other psychological problem has clouded his mind.

And what about other Christians who don't have the sacrament of reconciliation, or people who belong to other religions, or people who belong to no religion at all? Once again, God's mercy certainly covers all those who are truly sorry for their sins, even in the case of those who, through no fault of their own, do not believe in God but who nonetheless have striven to live an upright life.

Next week's newsletter will continue our discussion of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Father Boniface

Mass intentions for the period from April 20th to 28th

Saturday-Sunday, April 20th-21st

4:00 pm: Robert Zelasinski (D)
8:00 am: Virginia Taylor (D)
10:00 am: Patricia Gatens (D)
12:00 noon: Antonia D. Ong (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Peter Geosits (D)
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners

Monday, April 22nd

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: John Fazio (D)

Tuesday, April 23rd

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Edgardo G. Halagao (D)

Wednesday, April 24th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Florence D'Urso (D)

Thursday, April 25th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Gloria Chrissides (D)

Friday, April 26th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Gloria Chrissides (D)

Saturday, April 27th

8:00 am: Antoinette Garcia (D)
10:45 am (First Communion)
12:15 pm: Edward Dillon (D)
4:00 pm: Alice J. and Arturo Martinez (D)

Sunday, April 28th

8:00 am: Joseph and Anna Giaquinto (D)
10:00 am: Kevin and Willy Healy (L)
12:00 noon: Richard Serra (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Valarie Kurcz (D)
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners