

LENTEN COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICE

Monday, April 3rd, 7:00p.m.

“We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God!” We heard those words about a month ago as we began the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday. St. Paul’s plea to the Church in Corinth echoes through the centuries and challenges us today. On Monday, April 3rd at 7:00p.m., we invite you to respond to Paul’s plea “on behalf of Christ” and make time to experience reconciliation with the Lord and with the Church in the Sacrament of Penance.

The format will be the same as in past years: songs, readings and an examination of conscience, followed by an opportunity to come to one of the priests (face-to-face) and mention those sins which are most in need of forgiveness. We ask everyone, if at all possible, to remain after your own confession until the end of the service, and to pray for your fellow parishioners as they open their hearts to God’s loving mercy.

This might also be a good time to reflect on the role the Sacrament of Penance plays in our lives. Before Vatican II, regular confession was a ritual for most Catholics. However, in many cases, it was hardly a positive experience of reconciling love; for others, frequent confession fostered excessive scrupulosity, where every sin had to be counted and forgetting to mention a sin was itself a sin! These days, there is rarely a long line for weekly confession, but scrupulosity is still a problem for some who come to the sacrament far more often than they should. Then there is the great silent majority of Catholics who rarely or never avail themselves of the peace and healing available in this wonderful gift of the Church. Somewhere, there is a healthy balance. What should it be for you?

It makes little sense to come to confession every week or two and confess the same sins, especially when those sins are not serious. The fact is that only serious (mortal) sins must be confessed to a priest, and mortal sin—in spite of what many of us might have been taught long ago—is really fairly rare. On the other hand, it does make sense to celebrate the sacrament at least once a year (which is the minimum requirement for Catholics), even if one’s only sins are the everyday (venial) kind many of us struggle with: anger, impatience, intolerance, impure thoughts, envy, dishonesty, and so on. It makes sense because, not only does the Sacrament of Penance offer the absolute assurance of God’s forgiveness, but it also gives us a chance to take stock of our spiritual lives and deal with the little problems before they become bigger ones. Think of it as a spiritual check-up just six days before the beginning of the holiest week of the year and consider being here on April 3rd.