

Celebrating Reconciliation

Resources for Lent Penitential Service – Form II

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including texts

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- Readings – further suggestions

It may be helpful to read this material in conjunction with the following resources (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources):

- Resources for Parish Liturgy Groups —Rite of Reconciliation
- Celebrating Reconciliation Together

1. Preparation

Lent is a preparation for the celebration of Easter. For the Lenten liturgy disposes both catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery: catechumens, through the several stages of Christian initiation; the faithful, through reminders of their own baptism and through penitential practices.

General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar 27

Letting people know

It is helpful to give people as much notice as possible of the date and time your parish's Lent celebration of the Rite of Penance. The sooner they know when the service is going to be, the sooner it will be in their diary and the more likely they are to be able to take part.

Some people prefer to attend Reconciliation Services elsewhere than in their parish. It might be appreciated if local parishes shared information of when each was holding their services, and put the details of the time and place of all local services in their newsletters and on notice-boards in good time.

In addition to times of the communal Penance services it can be useful to give details of times when priests will be available for individual confessions. If priests are able to celebrate the sacrament in languages other than English putting details of which languages they can celebrate in will be of great advantage to those for whom English is not their first language. Especially helpful will be details of those priests locally who are able to celebrate in British Sign Language.

Hospitality

Much will be done to ensure that the Liturgy itself is welcome and sensitive to the needs and circumstances of those present. However first impressions are also very important. A simple and quiet ministry of welcome – perhaps just a word of welcome or greeting, and handing a copy of the service sheet – can make such a difference, especially if someone is coming to a Penitential service for the first time for many years, perhaps even after many years away from the Church.

Preparation of environment

The decoration of the Church should be both sensitive to the liturgical season of Lent and expressive of the sacrament of reconciliation. The liturgical colour purple is associated with both these. It may be possible to use the church lighting effectively — be aware of health and safety though.

The principal liturgical focus for decorating the church should be the ambo, from where God's word is proclaimed. If a strong visual focus is used (see below) care should be taken to balance distinct elements.

Penance has often been seen in terms of a renewal and restoration of our baptismal union with the Lord and with the Church. One focus of the season of Lent is the preparation, especially of adults, for the sacraments of initiation at Easter. These sacraments include the sacrament of Baptism. It would be especially appropriate at a Lenten Penance service to include prayer for those preparing for Baptism.

Because Baptism is especially an Easter sacrament, many parishes will only celebrate baptism during Lent in case of emergency, it is less appropriate to decorate the font and holy water stoups as part of the decoration of the Church for the penance service.

Consideration should be given to highlighting the places for individual reconciliation. They should be clearly designated and in a discrete space with thought given to how people will approach. If people's confessions are to be heard seated it would be suitable to place a low covered table at each position, with an open bible and a lit candle. These candles could be lit from a central candle at the beginning of the time of Individual Confession. If people's confessions are being heard standing it is generally more difficult to decorate the place, but if they are being heard in a side chapel or another such place something will be possible. Beware of placing candles on the floor where people will be standing, it is very easy for clothes to catch fire accidentally.

Visual focus

During the time for people's confessions period most people will be in their seats for most of the time. There will be music and song to support them in their prayer, but a visual focus can also be of assistance. This might be provided by a large cross or crucifix.

Alternatively it might be something more directly linked to the action of confession and absolution. Those who have been absolved might be invited to light a candle and place it on a stand around the cross—in which case make sure that there is plenty of space for the number of candles that will be lit. Candles placed too close together can melt and the molten wax ignite. In any case make sure that you have at hand a CO₂ fire extinguisher, and someone who knows how to use it, just in case.

Another, and perhaps safer option, is to have a large bowl with lighted charcoals and invite those who have received absolution to take a few grains of incense and scatter them over the charcoals. The charcoals will need replenishing every ten minutes or so, but that should be no great inconvenience.

2. Resources

Introductory Rites

Song

A song accompanies the beginning of the celebration. The song should express themes of the season and of the celebration including the scripture readings. Gospel procession

Two possible ways of beginning:

- Procession of Ministers. The Gospel Book carried in procession and placed on the altar.
- In some communities it may be appropriate to start in a more subdued way. People and Ministers gather as a simple chant is sung. All stand when the priest celebrant enters, on his own.

*Music suggestions*¹

However the liturgy begins the music should assist, for example: a strong proclamation of the love of God for us to accompany a procession of ministers; a quiet chant calling on God's mercy for a more subdued beginning.

Lent — Many Lenten hymns will be suitable. Where parishes have used a particular Gathering or Entrance Song for the Sundays of Lent that may be well be appropriate. As the celebration will be to the end of Lent and part of the community's preparation to celebrate the Triduum Hymns, Songs and Chants about the Paschal Mystery and particularly the Cross would be effective.

Penance — Hymns, songs and chants about penitence, reconciliation and mercy but also about God's love for us, hope and trust in God and the Church gathered. Consideration should be given to the use of a psalm text. If not being used for the Liturgy of the Word one of the Common Psalms for Lent(see below) would be suitable. The rite also suggests using a sung Kyrie or Lord have mercy — some settings would work better in this context than others

Psalm 15 (16)

Psalm 18 (19): 8–11

Psalm 22 (23)

Psalm 24 (25)

Psalm 26 (27)

Psalm 41–42 (42–43)

Psalm 50 (51) *common psalm for Lent*

Psalm 90 (91) *common psalm for Lent*

Psalm 102 (103)

Psalm 129 (130) *common psalm for Lent*

Psalm 138 (139)

¹ The music suggestions are offered are examples rather than as an exhaustive list. They are taken from the three hymn books in common use: *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone*, *Laudate* and *Liturgical Hymns Old and New*.

Settings of *Ubi Caritas*
Settings of Philippians 2
Settings of 1 Peter 2
All ye who seek a comfort sure
Attende, Domine
Bless the Lord, my soul
Come back to me/the Lord
Do not be afraid
Forgive our sins as we forgive
God to enfold you
Grant to us, O Lord
Lift high the cross
Lord Jesus, as we turn from sin
Lord Jesus think on me

Lord of life, we come to you
O God, I seek you
O Lord, be not mindful
O Lord, hear my prayer
Our Father, we have wandered
Praise to you, O Christ our Saviour
Return to God
There is a longing
There's a wideness in God's mercy
Turn to me
When I survey the wondrous cross
You are mine

Sign of the Cross

Greeting

Grace and peace be with you
from God the Father
and from the Lord Jesus Christ
who laid down his life for our sins.
R. And also with you,

Greeting 52:4

Opening Prayer

Father of mercies
and God of all consolation,
you do not wish the sinner to die
but to be converted and live.
Come to the aid of your people,
that they may turn from their sins
and live for you alone.

May we be attentive to your word,
confess our sins, receive your forgiveness,
and be always grateful for your loving kindness.
Help us to live the truth in love
and grow into the fullness of Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Opening Prayer 54:6

Liturgy of the Word

One or more readings may be chosen. If more than one is read, a psalm, another suitable song, or a period of silence should be inserted between them, so that the word of God may be more deeply understood and heartfelt assent may be given to it. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from the gospel. (RP 24)

Readings can be taken from the Lectionary, either for the Season of Lent (Volume 1) or the Rite of Penance (Volume 3 (also found in *Rite of Penance*)). The readings of the day might be considered.

The following readings are suggested for an Lent Service of Reconciliation. Further suggestion can be found at the end of this document.

Suggestion for Lent

Reading 1 Isaiah 53:1–12

The Lord burdened him with the sins of all of us

Lectionary Volume 3; p. 130

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 129

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Lectionary Volume 3: p. 159

or Psalm 22

The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want.

Lectionary Volume 1: p. 276

Reading 2 Romans 8:8–11

The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you.

Lectionary Volume 1: p.306

Gospel Luke 23:39–43

Today you will be with me in paradise.

Lectionary: Volume 3: p. 196

The note at the beginning of the Readings for Penance in the Lectionary Volume 3 notes that as the Rite of Penance does not take place within Mass the order of readings need not be as in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. An alternative way of presenting the readings may be to only use Reading 1 and the Gospel. The reading from Isaiah to be read reflectively and be interspersed with pauses for silent or the singing of a chant such as ‘Ours were the griefs he bore’(Dean) or ‘Jesus, remember me followed by a period of silence. If there is to be a Gospel Acclamation an appropriate verse might be: ‘Hail to you, our King! You alone have had compassion on our sins.’

Homily

The homily is based on the texts of the readings and should lead the penitents to examine their conscience and renew their lives (RP 56)

Examination of Conscience

An Examination of Conscience is not always necessary. It may be more appropriate to follow the homily with a period of silence.

Liturgy of Reconciliation

General Confession of Sins

Structure

1. *I confess...* introduced by the deacon or other minister
2. Penitential Intercessions
3. Lord's Prayer
4. Brief concluding prayer led by priest.

Based on Fourth example

Deacon or minister My brothers and sisters, confess your sins and pray for each other, that you may be healed.

All: I confess...

Deacon or minister The Good Shepherd seeks out the lost sheep and carries it back with joy. Let us pray with confidence to Christ, the Good Shepherd:

Lord, seek us out and bring us home.

R. Lord, seek us out and bring us home.

You were sent with good news for the poor and healing for the contrite.

You came to call sinners, not the just.

You forgave the many sins of the woman who showed you great love.

You did not shun the company of outcasts and sinners.

You carried back to the fold the sheep that had strayed.

You did not condemn the woman taken in adultery, but sent her away in peace.

You called Zacchaeus to repentance and a new life.

You promised Paradise to the repentant thief,

You are always interceding for us at the right hand of the Father.

The response Lord, seek out... could be replaced by a sung Kyrie. Further invocations could be included based, for example, on the Sunday gospels.

Deacon or minister Now, in obedience to Christ himself, let us join in prayer to the Father, asking him to forgive us as we forgive others.

All sing or say together:

Our Father...

The priest concludes

Lord,
draw near to your servants
who in the presence of your Church
confess that they are sinners.
Through the ministry of the Church
free them from all sin
so that renewed in spirit
they may give you thankful praise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

Individual confession and absolution

Music during the time of Individual Confession.

The music at this time should not be thought of as just ‘filling’ to help the time pass more pleasantly. It needs to be carefully prepared, and carefully performed.

In essence it is music for a procession; to accompany people on a journey. The predominant musical form is likely to be simple chants either a repeated ostinato or short refrain with verses by cantor or choir. Certainly a variety of approaches can be taken to bring a certain variety to a time during which not a lot is happening, publicly. The variety can be in the types of song – chants, hymns; solo pieces and choir, as well as congregational. It can also be in the contrast between sung pieces and instrumental pieces.

Where music accompanies texts these must be carefully chosen to complement the scriptures of the celebration, and the focus of the homily. That way they can support all that has preceded and be of assistance to those preparing for their confession or reflecting on it. Music groups that simply sing, ‘everything that we know under “Reconciliation” in the hymn book index’ can inadvertently do the congregation a disservice.

In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions are Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts. (GIRM 313)

It may well be that on such an occasion there may be additional music resources that can be called on. Some very able and willing musicians may be available for such services who, for a variety of reasons, may not be able to commit to being part of a regular music group for Sunday worship. Making use of their services can reduce the demands on the more regular musicians, make good use of the various talents within the community, and bring different sounds to this celebration.

Many of the suggestions for the **Opening Song** will be suitable.

Settings of Crucem tuam/Adoramus te, Christe, We adore you, O Christ
Healer of our every ill
Hold us in your mercy
Jesus, heal us
Misericordias Domine
Nada te turbe
Silent, surrendered
Take this moment
Take, O take me as I am

Exhortation

The presider invites all present to offer thanks and encourages them to do good works which will proclaim the grace of repentance in the life of the entire community and each of its members.

Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy

The rite specifically recommends scriptural texts for this proclamation of praise. Many parishes will have suitable settings of these texts — a selection from the 15 texts in the Rite is offered below. Other pieces with a similar theme may be used. Be careful to avoid texts that use the word *Alleluia*.

Psalm 97
Psalm 99
Psalm 102
Psalm 135
Psalm 144
Psalm 145
Isaiah 12: 1b–6
Daniel 3: 52–57
Luke 1: 46–55 — The Magnificat

Blest be the Lord
Now thank we all our God
Praise to you, O Christ, our Saviour
Thanks be to God

Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving

God and Father of us all,
you have forgiven our sins
and sent us your peace.
Help us to forgive each other
and to work together to establish peace in the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen

Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving 269

Concluding Rite

The blessing

May the Father, bless us,
for we are his children, born to eternal life.
R. Amen.

May the Son show us his saving power,
for he died and rose for us.
R. Amen.

May the Spirit give us the gift of holiness
and lead us by the right path,
for he dwells in our hearts.
R. Amen.

Blessing 270

Dismissal

The deacon or other minister or the priest himself dismisses the assembly:

The Lord has freed you from your sins.
Go in peace

All respond

Thanks be to God.

Dismissal 270

As people leave

The celebration of the rite of Penance is the beginning of a new period in a person's life, in which they try to live even more faithfully according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. To keep them mindful of what they have committed themselves to, it can be helpful to give a prayer card as a reminder of the celebration. Such cards can be easily produced using DTP facilities in the parish and might usefully include the principal scripture reading from the Liturgy of the Word. The holders of the copyright of the Jerusalem Bible (the version of the Scriptures in the present Lectionary) allow the reproduction of up to 500 words free of charge and without application, subject to the card bearing the following copyright line:

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Some Scripture Cards for Lent 2005 are available on the Liturgy Office website [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources]

Appendix

Other readings from the Lectionary for Rite of Penance

The Rite of Penance includes a celebration of the Word. As this does not take place during Mass, the order of readings needs not be as in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. If there are several readings, a psalm or other appropriate song or a period of silence should intervene between them. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from a Gospel.

The following readings are proposed as a help for priests and others involved in the selection of readings. For diversity, and according to pastoral needs of the group that is celebrating, other readings may be selected. Suggestions for presentation of the Word during the Rite of Penance will be found in the celebrant's edition of the Rite.

Lectionary 3: p.114

The above confirms what the texts of the Lectionary suggest that selection of Readings for the Rite of Penance are as much intended for reflection beforehand as for use within a celebration. The great length of some of the readings means that either only one or two readings are used or that part of a readings is chosen.

First Reading

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart.

Lectionary 3: p. 119

Isaiah 55:1–11

Let the wicked man abandon his way. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, for he is rich in forgiving.

Lectionary 3: p. 132

Isaiah 58:1–11

If you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like the noon.

Lectionary 3: p. 133

Ezekiel 11:14–21

I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh instead, so that they will keep my laws.

Lectionary 3: p. 138

Ezekiel 36:23–28

I shall pour clean water over you; I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws.

Lectionary 3: p. 140

Hosea 14:2–10

Israel, come back to the Lord your God.

Lectionary 3: p. 142

Joel 2:12–19

Come back to me with all your heart.

Lectionary 3: p. 142

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 50 r. 14

Give me again the joy of your help.

Lectionary 3: p. 152
choose a selection of verses

Ps 129 r.7

*With the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption.*

Lectionary 3: p. 159

Second Reading

Romans 5; 1-2. 5-8

The love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us.

Lectionary 1: p. 246

Romans 6:2-13

You must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

Lectionary 3: p. 163

Romans 8:31-34

God did not spare his own Son.

Lectionary 1: p. 226

Romans 12:1-2. 9-19

Let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind.

Lectionary 3: p. 165

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself.

Lectionary 3: p. 167

Ephesians 5:1-14

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light.

Lectionary 3: p. 169

Hebrews: 2:14-16; 5:7-9

He learnt to obey through suffering and became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

Lectionary 1: p. 392

Gospel

Matthew 9:9–13

I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.

Lectionary 3: p. 187

Matthew 18:21–35

This is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.

Lectionary 3: p. 188

Matthew 26:69–75

Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Lectionary 3: p. 190

Luke 7:36–50

Her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown great love.

Lectionary 3: p. 191

Luke 15:11–32

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly.

Lectionary 3: p. 193

John 8:1–11

Go away, and don't sin any more.

Lectionary 3: p. 197

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