

SECTION ONE

THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY

1076 The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹ The gift of the Spirit ushers in a new era in the “dispensation of the mystery”—the age of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes
739 present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, “until he comes.”² In this age of the Church Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments in what the common Tradition of the East and the West calls “the sacramental economy”; this is the communication (or “dispensation”) of the fruits of Christ’s Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church’s “sacramental” liturgy.

It is therefore important first to explain this “sacramental dispensation” (*chapter one*). The nature and essential features of liturgical celebration will then appear more clearly (*chapter two*).

CHAPTER ONE

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE AGE OF THE CHURCH

ARTICLE 1

THE LITURGY—WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

I. THE FATHER—SOURCE AND GOAL OF THE LITURGY

1077 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the
492 heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us before him in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”³

2626 1078 Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the Father; his blessing is both word and gift.⁴ When

1 Cf. SC 6; LG 2.

2 1 Cor 11:26.

3 Eph 1:3-6.

4 *eu-logia, bene-dictio*.

applied to man, the word "blessing" means adoration and surrender to his Creator in thanksgiving.

1079 From the beginning until the end of time the whole of God's work is a *blessing*. From the liturgical poem of the first creation to the canticles of the heavenly Jerusalem, the inspired authors proclaim the plan of salvation as one vast divine blessing.

1080 From the very beginning God blessed all living beings, especially man and woman. The covenant with Noah and with all living things renewed this blessing of fruitfulness despite man's sin which had brought a curse on the ground. But with Abraham, the divine blessing entered into human history which was moving toward death, to redirect it toward life, toward its source. By the faith of "the father of all believers," who embraced the blessing, the history of salvation is inaugurated.

1081 The divine blessings were made manifest in astonishing and saving events: the birth of Isaac, the escape from Egypt (Passover and Exodus), the gift of the promised land, the election of David, the presence of God in the Temple, the purifying exile, and return of a "small remnant." The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, interwoven in the liturgy of the Chosen People, recall these divine blessings and at the same time respond to them with blessings of praise and thanksgiving.

1082 In the Church's liturgy the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated. The Father is acknowledged and adored as the source and the end of all the blessings of creation and salvation. In his Word who became incarnate, died, and rose for us, he fills us with his blessings. Through his Word, he pours into our hearts the Gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit.

1083 The dual dimension of the Christian liturgy as a response of faith and love to the spiritual blessings the Father bestows on us is thus evident. On the one hand, the Church, united with her Lord and "in the Holy Spirit,"⁵ blesses the Father "for his inexpressible gift"⁶ in her adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. On the other hand, until the consummation of God's plan, the Church never ceases to present to the Father the offering of his own gifts and to beg him to send the Holy Spirit upon that offering, upon herself, upon the faithful, and upon the whole world, so that through communion in the death and resurrection of Christ the Priest, and by the power of the Spirit, these divine blessings will bring forth the fruits of life "to the praise of his glorious grace."⁷

5 Lk 10:21.

6 2 Cor 9:15.

7 Eph 1:6.

II. CHRIST'S WORK IN THE LITURGY

Christ glorified . . .

662 1084 "Seated at the right hand of the Father" and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.

1085 In the liturgy of the Church, it is principally his own Paschal mystery that Christ signifies and makes present. During his earthly life Jesus announced his Paschal mystery by his teaching and anticipated it by his actions. When his Hour comes, he lives out the unique event of history which does not pass away: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father "once for all."⁸ His Paschal mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Paschal mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection *abides* and draws everything toward life.

. . . from the time of the Church of the Apostles . . .

858 1086 "Accordingly, just as Christ was sent by the Father so also he sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan and from death and brought us into the Kingdom of his Father. But he also willed that the work of salvation which they preached should be set in train through the sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves."⁹

1087 Thus the risen Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit to the apostles, entrusted to them his power of sanctifying;¹⁰ they became sacramental signs of Christ. By the power of the same Holy Spirit they entrusted this power to their successors. This

8 Rom 6:10; Heb 7:27; 9:12; cf. Jn 13:1; 17:1.

9 SC 6.

10 Cf. Jn 20:21-23.

"apostolic succession" structures the whole liturgical life of the Church and is itself sacramental, handed on by the sacrament of Holy Orders. 1536

... is present in the earthly liturgy ...

1088 "To accomplish so great a work"—the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation—"Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.'"¹¹ 776 669 1373

1089 "Christ, indeed, always associates the Church with himself in this great work in which God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride who calls to her Lord and through him offers worship to the eternal Father."¹² 796

... which participates in the liturgy of heaven

1090 "In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory."¹³ 1137-1139

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH IN THE LITURGY

1091 In the liturgy the Holy Spirit is teacher of the faith of the People of God and artisan of "God's masterpieces," the sacraments of the New Covenant. The desire and work of the Spirit in the heart 798

11 SC 7; Mt 18:20.

12 SC 7.

13 SC 8; cf. LG 50.

of the Church is that we may live from the life of the risen Christ. When the Spirit encounters in us the response of faith which he has aroused in us, he brings about genuine cooperation. Through it, the liturgy becomes the common work of the Holy Spirit and the Church.

1092 In this sacramental dispensation of Christ's mystery the Holy Spirit acts in the same way as at other times in the economy
737 of salvation: he prepares the Church to encounter her Lord; he recalls and makes Christ manifest to the faith of the assembly. By his transforming power, he makes the mystery of Christ present here and now. Finally the Spirit of communion unites the Church to the life and mission of Christ.

The Holy Spirit prepares for the reception of Christ

1093 In the sacramental economy the Holy Spirit fulfills what was prefigured in *the Old Covenant*. Since Christ's Church was
762 "prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and in the Old Covenant,"¹⁴ the Church's liturgy has retained certain elements of the worship of the Old Covenant as integral and irreplaceable, adopting them as her own:

121 — notably, reading the Old Testament;

2585 — praying the Psalms;

1081 — above all, recalling the saving events and significant realities which have found their fulfillment in the mystery of Christ (promise and covenant, Exodus and Passover, kingdom and temple, exile and return).

128-130 **1094** It is on this harmony of the two Testaments that the Paschal catechesis of the Lord is built,¹⁵ and then, that of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. This catechesis unveils what lay hidden under the letter of the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ. It is called "typological" because it reveals the newness of Christ on the basis of the "figures" (types) which announce him in the deeds, words, and symbols of the first covenant. By this re-reading in the Spirit of Truth, starting from Christ, the figures are unveiled.¹⁶ Thus the flood and Noah's ark prefigured salvation by Baptism,¹⁷ as did the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea. Water from the rock was the figure of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, "the true bread from heaven."¹⁸

14 LG 2.

15 Cf. DV 14-16; Lk 24:13-49.

16 Cf. 2 Cor 3:14-16.

17 Cf. 1 Pet 3:21.

18 Jn 6:32; cf. 1 Cor 10:1-6.

1095 For this reason the Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the “today” of her liturgy. But this also demands that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this spiritual understanding of the economy of salvation as the Church’s liturgy reveals it and enables us to live it. 281 117

1096 *Jewish liturgy and Christian liturgy.* A better knowledge of the Jewish people’s faith and religious life as professed and lived even now can help our better understanding of certain aspects of Christian liturgy. For both Jews and Christians Sacred Scripture is an essential part of their respective liturgies: in the proclamation of the Word of God, the response to this word, prayer of praise and intercession for the living and the dead, invocation of God’s mercy. In its characteristic structure the Liturgy of the Word originates in Jewish prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical texts and formularies, as well as those of our most venerable prayers, including the Lord’s Prayer, have parallels in Jewish prayer. The Eucharistic Prayers also draw their inspiration from the Jewish tradition. The relationship between Jewish liturgy and Christian liturgy, but also their differences in content, are particularly evident in the great feasts of the liturgical year, such as Passover. Christians and Jews both celebrate the Passover. For Jews, it is the Passover of history, tending toward the future; for Christians, it is the Passover fulfilled in the death and Resurrection of Christ, though always in expectation of its definitive consummation. 1174 1352 840

1097 In the *liturgy of the New Covenant* every liturgical action, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church. The liturgical assembly derives its unity from the “communion of the Holy Spirit” who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This assembly transcends racial, cultural, social—indeed, all human affinities.

1098 The assembly should *prepare* itself to encounter its Lord and to become “a people well disposed.” The preparation of hearts is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, especially of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father’s will. These dispositions are the precondition both for the reception of other graces conferred in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life which the celebration is intended to produce afterward. 1430

The Holy Spirit recalls the mystery of Christ

1099 The Spirit and the Church cooperate to manifest Christ and his work of salvation in the liturgy. Primarily in the Eucharist, and by analogy in the other sacraments, the liturgy is the *memorial* of the mystery of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the Church’s living memory.¹⁹ 91

19 Cf. Jn 14:26.

1134 **1100** *The Word of God.* The Holy Spirit first recalls the meaning of the salvation event to the liturgical assembly by giving life to the Word of God, which is proclaimed so that it may be received and lived:

103, 131 In the celebration of the liturgy, Sacred Scripture is extremely important. From it come the lessons that are read and explained in the homily and the psalms that are sung. It is from the Scriptures that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and their force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning.²⁰

117 **1101** The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual understanding of the Word of God to those who read or hear it, according to the dispositions of their hearts. By means of the words, actions, and symbols that form the structure of a celebration, the Spirit puts both the faithful and the ministers into a living relationship with Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, so that they can live out the meaning of what they hear, contemplate, and do in the celebration.

1102 "By the saving word of God, faith . . . is nourished in the hearts of believers. By this faith then the congregation of the faithful begins and grows."²¹ The proclamation does not stop with a teaching; it elicits the *response of faith* as consent and commitment, directed at the covenant between God and his people. Once again it is the Holy Spirit who gives the grace of faith, strengthens it and makes it grow in the community. The liturgical assembly is first of all a communion in faith.

1362 **1103** *Anamnesis.* The liturgical celebration always refers to God's saving interventions in history. "The economy of Revelation is realized by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other. . . . [T]he words for their part proclaim the works and bring to light the mystery they contain."²² In the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit "recalls" to the assembly all that Christ has done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the churches, the celebration "makes a remembrance" of the marvelous works of God in an anamnesis which may be more or less developed. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (*doxology*).

20 SC 24.

21 PO 4.

22 DV 2.

The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ

1104 Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, makes them present. The Paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated. It is the celebrations that are repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that makes the unique mystery present. 1085

1105 The *Epiclesis* ("invocation upon") is the intercession in which the priest begs the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the offerings may become the body and blood of Christ and that the faithful, by receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God.²³ 1153

1106 Together with the anamnesis, the *epiclesis* is at the heart of each sacramental celebration, most especially of the Eucharist:

You ask how the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine . . . the Blood of Christ. I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought. . . . Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh.²⁴ 1375

1107 The Holy Spirit's transforming power in the liturgy hastens the coming of the kingdom and the consummation of the mystery of salvation. While we wait in hope he causes us really to anticipate the fullness of communion with the Holy Trinity. Sent by the Father who hears the *epiclesis* of the Church, the Spirit gives life to those who accept him and is, even now, the "guarantee" of their inheritance.²⁵ 2816

The communion of the Holy Spirit

1108 In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of the Father's vine which bears fruit on its branches.²⁶ The most intimate cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is achieved in the liturgy. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of communion, abides indefectibly in the Church. For this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God's scattered children together. Communion with 788 1091 775

23 Cf. Rom 12:1.

24 St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 4, 13: PG 94, 1145A.

25 Cf. Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22.

26 Cf. Jn 15:1-17; Gal 5:22.

the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion are inseparably the fruit of the Spirit in the liturgy.²⁷

- 1109** The epiclesis is also a prayer for the full effect of the assembly's communion with the mystery of Christ. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"²⁸ have to remain with us always and bear fruit beyond the Eucharistic celebration. The Church therefore asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to make the lives of the faithful a living
 1368 sacrifice to God by their spiritual transformation into the image of Christ, by concern for the Church's unity, and by taking part in her mission through the witness and service of charity.

IN BRIEF

- 1110** In the liturgy of the Church, God the Father is blessed and adored as the source of all the blessings of creation and salvation with which he has blessed us in his Son, in order to give us the Spirit of filial adoption.
- 1111** Christ's work in the liturgy is sacramental: because his mystery of salvation is made present there by the power of his Holy Spirit; because his Body, which is the Church, is like a sacrament (sign and instrument) in which the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of salvation; and because through her liturgical actions the pilgrim Church already participates, as by a foretaste, in the heavenly liturgy.
- 1112** The mission of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Church is to prepare the assembly to encounter Christ; to recall and manifest Christ to the faith of the assembly; to make the saving work of Christ present and active by his transforming power; and to make the gift of communion bear fruit in the Church.
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²⁷ Cf. 1 Jn 1:3-7.

²⁸ 2 Cor 13:13.

ARTICLE 2

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE CHURCH'S
SACRAMENTS

1113 The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments.²⁹ There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.³⁰ This article will discuss what is common to the Church's seven sacraments from a doctrinal point of view. What is common to them in terms of their celebration will be presented in the second chapter, and what is distinctive about each will be the topic of *Section Two*. 1210

I. THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRIST

1114 "Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consensus . . . of the Fathers," we profess that "the sacraments of the new law were . . . all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord."³¹

1115 Jesus' words and actions during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of his Paschal mystery. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the Church when all was accomplished. The mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church, for "what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries."³² 512-560

1116 Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ,³³ which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. 1504 774

II. THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

1117 As she has done for the canon of Sacred Scripture and for the doctrine of the faith, the Church, by the power of the Spirit who guides her "into all truth," has gradually recognized this treasure 120

29 Cf. SC 6.

30 Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274) DS 860; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1310; Council of Trent (1547): DS 1601.

31 Council of Trent (1547): DS 1600-1601.

32 St. Leo the Great, *Sermo*. 74, 2: PL 54, 398.

33 Cf. Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46.

received from Christ and, as the faithful steward of God's mysteries, has determined its "dispensation."³⁴ Thus the Church has discerned over the centuries that among liturgical celebrations there are seven that are, in the strict sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord.

1118 The sacraments are "of the Church" in the double sense that they are "by her" and "for her." They are "by the Church," for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are "for the Church" in the sense that "the sacraments make the Church,"³⁵ since they manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons.

792 1119 Forming "as it were, one mystical person" with Christ the head, the Church acts in the sacraments as "an organically structured priestly community."³⁶ Through Baptism and Confirmation the priestly people is enabled to celebrate the liturgy, while those of the faithful "who have received Holy Orders, are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ."³⁷

1547 1120 The ordained ministry or *ministerial* priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood.³⁸ The ordained priesthood guarantees that it really is Christ who acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son was committed to the apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person.³⁹ The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments.

1272, 1304 1121 The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental *character* or "seal" by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. 1582 This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible,⁴⁰ it remains for ever in the Christian as a

34 Jn 16:13; cf. Mt 13:52; 1 Cor 4:1.

35 St. Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, 22, 17: PL 41, 779; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 64, 2 ad 3.

36 LG 11; cf. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (1943).

37 LG 11 § 2.

38 Cf. LG 10 § 2.

39 Cf. Jn 20:21-23; Lk 24:47; Mt 28:18-20.

40 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1609.

positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated.

III. THE SACRAMENTS OF FAITH

1122 Christ sent his apostles so that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations."⁴¹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."⁴² The mission to baptize, and so the sacramental mission, is implied in the mission to evangelize, because the sacrament is prepared for 849
by the word of God and by the faith which is assent to this word: 1236

The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God. . . . The preaching of the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word.⁴³

1123 "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called 'sacraments of faith.'⁴⁴ 1154

1124 The Church's faith precedes the faith of the believer who 166
is invited to adhere to it. When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles—whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* (or: *legem credendi lex 1327
statuat supplicandi*, according to Prosper of Aquitaine [5th cent.]).⁴⁵
The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she 78
prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.⁴⁶

1125 For this reason no sacramental rite may be modified or 1205
manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.

41 Lk 24:47.

42 Mt 28:19.

43 PO 4 §§ 1, 2.

44 SC 59.

45 Ep. 8.

46 Cf. DV 8.

1126 Likewise, since the sacraments express and develop the com-
 815 munion of faith in the Church, the *lex orandi* is one of the essential
 criteria of the dialogue that seeks to restore the unity of Christians.⁴⁷

IV. THE SACRAMENTS OF SALVATION

1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the
 1084 grace that they signify.⁴⁸ They are *efficacious* because in them Christ
 himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his
 sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament
 1105 signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church
 which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the
 696 power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it
 touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever
 is subjected to his power.

1128 This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation⁴⁹ that the
 sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the
 action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of
 Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is
 1584 not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the
 recipient, but by the power of God."⁵⁰ From the moment that a
 sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the
 Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it,
 independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Neverthe-
 less, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of
 the one who receives them.

1257 1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the
 2003 New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*.⁵¹ "Sacramental grace" is the
 grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.
 The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming
 460 them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the
 Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature⁵²
 by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

V. THE SACRAMENTS OF ETERNAL LIFE

1130 The Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord "until he
 comes," when God will be "everything to everyone."⁵³ Since the

47 Cf. UR 2; 15.

48 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1605; DS 1606.

49 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1608.

50 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 68, 8.

51 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1604.

52 Cf. 2 *Pet* 1:4.

53 1 *Cor* 11:26; 15:28.

apostolic age the liturgy has been drawn toward its goal by the Spirit's groaning in the Church: *Marana tha!*⁵⁴ The liturgy thus shares in Jesus' desire: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you . . . until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."⁵⁵ In the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life, while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus."⁵⁶ The "Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come . . . Come, Lord Jesus!'"⁵⁷

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St. Thomas sums up the various aspects of sacramental signs: "Therefore a sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it—Christ's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's Passion—grace; and prefigures what that Passion pledges to us—future glory."⁵⁸

IN BRIEF

- 1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.
 - 1132 The Church celebrates the sacraments as a priestly community structured by the baptismal priesthood and the priesthood of ordained ministers.
 - 1133 The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it.
 - 1134 The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.
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54 1 Cor 16:22.

55 Lk 22:15.

56 Titus 2:13.

57 Rev 22:17, 20.

58 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 60, 3.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SACRAMENTS OF HEALING

1420 Through the sacraments of Christian initiation, man receives the new life of Christ. Now we carry this life "in earthen vessels," and it remains "hidden with Christ in God."¹ We are still in our "earthly tent," subject to suffering, illness, and death.² This new life as a child of God can be weakened and even lost by sin.

1421 The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health,³ has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

ARTICLE 4

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

1422 "Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain 980 pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion."⁴

I. WHAT IS THIS SACRAMENT CALLED?

1423 It is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes 1989 sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father⁵ from whom one has strayed by sin.

It is called the *sacrament of Penance*, since it consecrates the 1440 Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.

1424 It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure 1456 or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession"—

1 2 Cor 4:7; Col 3:3.

2 2 Cor 5:1.

3 Cf. Mk 2:1-12.

4 LG 11 § 2.

5 Cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 15:18.

acknowledgment and praise—of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

1449 It is called the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace."⁶

1442 It is called the *sacrament of Reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God."⁷ He who lives by God's merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord's call: "Go; first be reconciled to your brother."⁸

II. WHY A SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION AFTER BAPTISM?

1263 1425 "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."⁹ One must appreciate the magnitude of the gift God has given us in the sacraments of Christian initiation in order to grasp the degree to which sin is excluded for him who has "put on Christ."¹⁰ But the apostle John also says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."¹¹ And the Lord himself taught 2838 us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses,"¹² linking our forgiveness of one another's offenses to the forgiveness of our sins that God will grant us.

1426 *Conversion* to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us "holy and without blemish," just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is "holy and without blemish."¹³ Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination 405, 978 to sin that tradition calls *concupiscence*, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove 1264 themselves in the struggle of Christian life.¹⁴ This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.¹⁵

6 OP 46: formula of absolution.

7 2 Cor 5:20.

8 Mt 5:24.

9 1 Cor 6:11.

10 Gal 3:27.

11 1 Jn 1:8.

12 Cf. Lk 11:4; Mt 6:12.

13 Eph 1:4; 5:27.

14 Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515.

15 Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545; LG 40.

III. THE CONVERSION OF THE BAPTIZED

1427 Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."¹⁶ In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism¹⁷ that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life. 541 1226

1428 Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This *second conversion* is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal."¹⁸ This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a "contrite heart," drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.¹⁹ 1036 853 1996

1429 St. Peter's conversion after he had denied his master three times bears witness to this. Jesus' look of infinite mercy drew tears of repentance from Peter and, after the Lord's resurrection, a threefold affirmation of love for him.²⁰ The second conversion also has a *communitarian* dimension, as is clear in the Lord's call to a whole Church: "Repent!"²¹

St. Ambrose says of the two conversions that, in the Church, "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance."²²

IV. INTERIOR PENANCE

1430 Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at the *conversion of the heart, interior conversion*. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance.²³ 1098

16 Mk 1:15.

17 Cf. Acts 2:38.

18 LG 8 § 3.

19 Ps 51:17; cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32; 1 Jn 4:10.

20 Cf. Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-17.

21 Rev 2:5, 16.

22 St. Ambrose, *ep.* 41, 12: PL 16, 1116.

23 Cf. Joel 2:12-13; Isa 1:16-17; Mt 6:1-6; 16-18.

1431 Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole
 life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin,
 1451 a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions
 we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and
 resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust
 in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by
 a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus*
 368 (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart).²⁴

1432 The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give
 man a new heart.²⁵ Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of
 1989 God who makes our hearts return to him: "Restore us to thyself, O
 LORD, that we may be restored!"²⁶ God gives us the strength to
 begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our
 heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear
 offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human
 heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have
 pierced.²⁷

Let us fix our eyes on Christ's blood and understand how
 precious it is to his Father, for, poured out for our salvation,
 it has brought to the whole world the grace of repentance.²⁸

729 1433 Since Easter, the Holy Spirit has proved "the world wrong
 about sin,"²⁹ i.e., proved that the world has not believed in him
 whom the Father has sent. But this same Spirit who brings sin to
 692, 1848 light is also the Consoler who gives the human heart grace for
 repentance and conversion.³⁰

V. THE MANY FORMS OF PENANCE IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

1969 1434 The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many
 and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms,
fasting, prayer, and almsgiving,³¹ which express conversion in relation to
 oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought
 about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgive-
 ness of sins: efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repen-
 tance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the
 saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."³²

24 Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1676-1678; 1705; cf. *Roman Catechism*, II, V, 4.

25 Cf. *Ezek* 36:26-27.

26 *Lam* 5:21.

27 Cf. *Jn* 19:37; *Zech* 12:10.

28 St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Cor.* 7, 4: PG 1, 224.

29 Cf. *Jn* 16:8-9.

30 Cf. *Jn* 15:26; *Acts* 2:36-38; John Paul II, *DeV* 27-48.

31 Cf. *Tob* 12:8; *Mt* 6:1-18.

32 *1 Pet* 4:8; cf. *Jas* 5:20.

1435 Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right,³³ by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.³⁴

1436 *Eucharist and Penance.* Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins."³⁵

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1437 Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father—every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.

1438 *The seasons and days of penance* in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice.³⁶ These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).

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1439 *The process of conversion and repentance* was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father.³⁷ the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy—all these are characteristic of the process of conversion. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life—pure, worthy, and joyful—of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ who knows the depths of his Father's love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way.

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VI. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

1440 Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's

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33 Cf. Am 5:24; Isa 1:17.

34 Cf. Lk 9:23.

35 Council of Trent (1551): DS 1638.

36 Cf. SC 109-110; CIC, cann. 1249-1253; CCEO, cann. 880-883.

37 Cf. Lk 15:11-24.

forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.³⁸

Only God forgives sin

270, 431 **1441** Only God forgives sins.³⁹ Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive
589 sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven."⁴⁰ Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.⁴¹

1442 Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the
983 apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation."⁴² The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."⁴³

Reconciliation with the Church

1443 During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin
545 had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.⁴⁴

981 **1444** In imparting to his apostles his own power to forgive sins the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. This ecclesial dimension of their task is expressed most notably in Christ's solemn words to Simon Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."⁴⁵ "The office of binding and loosing which

38 Cf. LG 11.

39 Cf. Mk 2:7.

40 Mk 2:5, 10; Lk 7:48.

41 Cf. Jn 20:21-23.

42 2 Cor 5:18.

43 2 Cor 5:20.

44 Cf. Lk 15; 19:9.

45 Mt 16:19; cf. Mt 18:18; 28:16-20.

was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of the apostles united to its head."⁴⁶

1445 The words *bind and loose* mean: whomever you exclude 553
from your communion, will be excluded from communion with
God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will
welcome back into his. *Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable
from reconciliation with God.*

The sacrament of forgiveness

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful 979
members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism,
have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace 1856
and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament
of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the
grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacra- 1990
ment as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which
is the loss of grace."⁴⁷

1447 Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has
exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably.
During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had com-
mitted particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry,
murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to
which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years,
before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" (which con-
cerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain
regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish mission-
aries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental
Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public
and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with
the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret
between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility
of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this
sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be
integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the
form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

1448 Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this
sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same *fundamental
structure* is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential
elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes
conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contri-
tion, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action
through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through

⁴⁶ LG 22 § 2.

⁴⁷ Tertullian, *De Pænit.* 4, 2: PL 1, 1343; cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1542.

the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion.

- 1481 **1449** The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church expresses the essential elements of this sacrament: the Father of mercies is the source of all forgiveness. He effects the reconciliation
234 of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church:

God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and the resurrection of his Son
has reconciled the world to himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God give you pardon and peace,
and I absolve you from your sins
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit.⁴⁸

VII. THE ACTS OF THE PENITENT

- 1450** "Penance requires . . . the sinner to endure all things willingly, be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practice complete humility and fruitful satisfaction."⁴⁹

Contrition

- 1451** Among the penitent's acts contrition occupies first place. Contrition is "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again."⁵⁰
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1822 **1452** When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called "perfect" (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible.⁵¹

- 1453** The contrition called "imperfect" (or "attrition") is also a gift of God, a prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is born of the consideration of sin's ugliness or the fear of eternal damnation and the other penalties threatening the sinner (contrition of fear). Such

⁴⁸ OP 46: formula of absolution.

⁴⁹ *Roman Catechism* II, V, 21; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1673.

⁵⁰ Council of Trent (1551): DS 1676.

⁵¹ Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1677.

a stirring of conscience can initiate an interior process which, under the prompting of grace, will be brought to completion by sacramental absolution. By itself however, imperfect contrition cannot obtain the forgiveness of grave sins, but it disposes one to obtain forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance.⁵²

1454 The reception of this sacrament ought to be prepared for by an *examination of conscience* made in the light of the Word of God. The passages best suited to this can be found in the Ten Commandments, the moral catechesis of the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic teachings.⁵³

The confession of sins

1455 The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply 1424
human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with
others. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins
he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens 1734
himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order
to make a new future possible.

1456 Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament
of Penance: "All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent
self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in 1855
confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed
against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins
sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more danger-
ous than those which are committed openly."⁵⁴

When Christ's faithful strive to confess all the sins that they
can remember, they undoubtedly place all of them before 1505
the divine mercy for pardon. But those who fail to do so and
knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine
goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest,
"for if the sick person is too ashamed to show his wound to
the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not
know."⁵⁵

1457 According to the Church's command, "after having attained the 2042
age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully
to confess serious sins at least once a year."⁵⁶ Anyone who is aware of
having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even
if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental 1385

52 Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1678; 1705.

53 Cf. Mt 5-7; Rom 12-15; 1 Cor 12-13; Gal 5; Eph 4-6; etc.

54 Council of Trent (1551): DS 1680 (ND 1626); cf. Ex 20:17; Mt 5:28.

55 Council of Trent (1551): DS 1680 (ND 1626); cf. St. Jerome, *In Eccl.* 10, 11: PL 23:1096.

56 Cf. CIC, can. 989; Council of Trent (1551): DS 1683; DS 1708.

absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Communion and there is no possibility of going to confession.⁵⁷ Children must go to the sacrament of Penance before receiving Holy Communion for the first time.⁵⁸

1458 Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.⁵⁹ Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us
1783 form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful.⁶⁰

2468 Whoever confesses his sins . . . is already working with God. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: when you hear "man"—this is what God has made; when you hear "sinner"—this is what man himself has made. Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light.⁶¹

Satisfaction

1459 Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods,
2412 restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for
2487 injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused.⁶² Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must "make satisfaction for" or
1473 "expiate" his sins. This satisfaction is also called "penance."

57 Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1647; 1661; CIC, can. 916; CCEO, can. 711.

58 Cf. CIC, can. 914.

59 Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1680; CIC, can. 988 § 2.

60 Cf. *Lk* 6:36.

61 St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 12, 13: PL 35, 1491.

62 Cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1712.

1460 The *penance* the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent's personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, "provided we suffer with him."⁶³ 2447 618

The satisfaction that we make for our sins, however, is not so much ours as though it were not done through Jesus Christ. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with the cooperation of "him who strengthens" us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ . . . in whom we make satisfaction by bringing forth "fruits that befit repentance." These fruits have their efficacy from him, by him they are offered to the Father, and through him they are accepted by the Father.⁶⁴ 2011

VIII. THE MINISTER OF THIS SACRAMENT

1461 Since Christ entrusted to his apostles the ministry of reconciliation,⁶⁵ bishops who are their successors, and priests, the bishops' collaborators, continue to exercise this ministry. Indeed bishops and priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." 981

1462 Forgiveness of sins brings reconciliation with God, but also with the Church. Since ancient times the bishop, visible head of a particular Church, has thus rightfully been considered to be the one who principally has the power and ministry of reconciliation: he is the moderator of the penitential discipline.⁶⁶ Priests, his collaborators, exercise it to the extent that they have received the commission either from their bishop (or religious superior) or the Pope, according to the law of the Church.⁶⁷ 886 1567

⁶³ Rom 8:17; Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:1-2; cf. Council of Trent (1551): DS 1690.

⁶⁴ Council of Trent (1551): DS 1691; cf. Phil 4:13; 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; Gal 6:14; Lk 3:8.

⁶⁵ Cf. Jn 20:23; 2 Cor 5:18.

⁶⁶ Cf. LG 26 § 3.

⁶⁷ Cf. CIC, cann. 844; 967-969; 972; CCEO, can. 722 §§ 3-4.

1463 Certain particularly grave sins incur excommunication, the most severe ecclesiastical penalty, which impedes the reception of the sacraments and the exercise of certain ecclesiastical acts, and for which absolution consequently cannot be granted, according to canon law, except by the Pope, the bishop of the place or priests authorized by them.⁶⁸ In danger of death any priest, even if deprived of faculties for hearing confessions, can absolve from every sin and excommunication.⁶⁹

1464 Priests must encourage the faithful to come to the sacrament of Penance and must make themselves available to celebrate this sacrament each time Christians reasonably ask for it.⁷⁰

1465 When he celebrates the sacrament of Penance, the priest is fulfilling the ministry of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, of the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds, of the Father who awaits the prodigal son and welcomes him on his return, and of the just and impartial judge whose judgment is both just and merciful. The priest is the sign and the instrument of God's merciful love for the sinner.

1466 The confessor is not the master of God's forgiveness, but its servant. The minister of this sacrament should unite himself to the intention and charity of Christ.⁷¹ He should have a proven knowledge of Christian behavior, experience of human affairs, respect and sensitivity toward the one who has fallen; he must love the truth, be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, and lead the penitent with patience toward healing and full maturity. He must pray and do penance for his penitent, entrusting him to the Lord's mercy.

1467 Given the delicacy and greatness of this ministry and the respect due to persons, the Church declares that every priest who hears confessions is bound under very severe penalties to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that his penitents have confessed to him. He can make no use of knowledge that confession gives him about penitents' lives.⁷² This secret, which admits of no exceptions, is called the "sacramental seal," because what the penitent has made known to the priest remains "sealed" by the sacrament.

68 Cf. CIC, cann. 1331; 1354-1357; CCEO, can. 1431; 1434; 1420.

69 Cf. CIC, can. 976; CCEO, can. 725.

70 Cf. CIC, can. 986; CCEO, can. 735; PO 13.

71 Cf. PO 13.

72 Cf. CIC, can. 1388 § 1; CCEO, can. 1456.

IX. THE EFFECTS OF THIS SACRAMENT

1468 "The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship."⁷³ Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation "is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation."⁷⁴ Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true "spiritual resurrection," restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.⁷⁵ 2305

1469 This sacrament *reconciles us with the Church*. Sin damages or even breaks fraternal communion. The sacrament of Penance repairs or restores it. In this sense it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion, but has also a revitalizing effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members.⁷⁶ Re-established or strengthened in the communion of saints, the sinner is made stronger by the exchange of spiritual goods among all the living members of the Body of Christ, whether still on pilgrimage or already in the heavenly homeland.⁷⁷ 953 949

It must be recalled that . . . this reconciliation with God leads, as it were, to other reconciliations, which repair the other breaches caused by sin. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his innermost truth. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way offended and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation.⁷⁸

1470 In this sacrament, the sinner, placing himself before the merciful judgment of God, *anticipates* in a certain way *the judgment* to which he will be subjected at the end of his earthly life. For it is now, in this life, that we are offered the choice between life and death, and it is only by the road of conversion that we can enter the Kingdom, from which one is excluded by grave sin.⁷⁹ In converting to Christ through penance and faith, the sinner passes from death to life and "does not come into judgment."⁸⁰ 678, 1039

73 *Roman Catechism*, II, V, 18.

74 Council of Trent (1551): DS 1674.

75 Cf. Lk 15:32.

76 Cf. 1 Cor 12:26.

77 Cf. LG 48-50.

78 John Paul II, RP 31, 5.

79 Cf. 1 Cor 5:11; Gal 5:19-21; Rev 22:15.

80 Jn 5:24.