



## Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a foundational tenet of Christian faith. Jesus, after his resurrection, instructed his disciples “that repentance for forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations” (Matt. 24:47). Reconciliation reflects the nature of God as a merciful God: “Lord, you are good and forgiving, most merciful to all who call on you” (Ps 86:5). It also recognizes that the one who is on a journey of faith is on a continual journey of conversion (SEE: *Metanoia*).

The sacrament of Reconciliation (or Penance) is one of seven sacraments within the Catholic Church. Traditionally, the sacrament was known as Confession, with the emphasis on the one confessing (known as the penitent). However, following the Second Vatican Council, the sacramental rite was changed to the Rite of Reconciliation to shift the focus from the sinner to a benevolent God who always seeks out the “lost sheep”. In line with the “lost ones” parable (see Luke 15), the sacrament highlights the celebratory nature of reconciliation, for “we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found” (Lk 15: 32). The rite still requires the penitent to undertake acts of penance, but these are a response to, not a condition of, the forgiveness of God.

The Rite of Reconciliation recognizes that actions of forgiveness and reconciliation firstly occur between the parties seeking and offering to be reconciled. The sacrament brings into focus the faith community’s responsibility to celebrate and support the penitent’s ongoing journey of conversion.