

# Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Archdiocese of Perth

25 August 2014







# Your first confession

- ✦ What do you remember?
- ✦ Where was it?
- ✦ When was it?
- ✦ How did you feel before and after?
- ✦ What happened?





# If you've never gone to confession in your life...

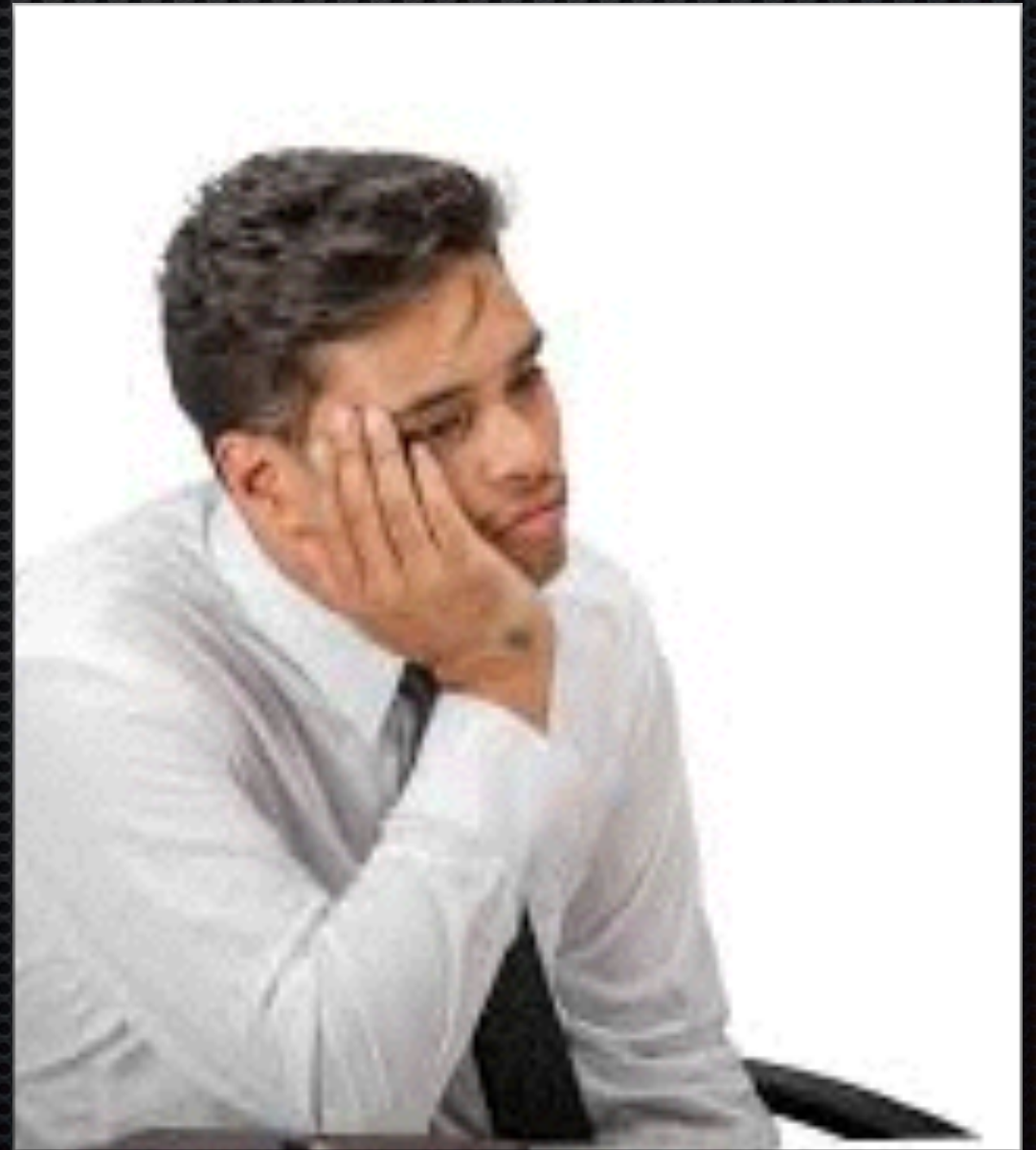
- ✦ What have you heard about going to confession?
- ✦ Where have you learned about it? What movies? What people?





# Forgiven

- How else have you experienced forgiveness?





# Why is going to confession hard?

- ✦ It is hard to admit we have done something wrong
- ✦ It is hard to say this to a priest
- ✦ We expect punishment when we admit guilt
- ✦ ???





# What makes confession good?

- ✦ Feeling of relief afterwards
- ✦ Challenge to change behavior
- ✦ The opportunity to express sorrow and hear forgiveness out loud







# Romans 5:10

Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life.





## 2 Corinthians 5:18, 20

God... has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation.... So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.



# The need for repentance - Matthew

For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (7:14)

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. (7:21)

these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (25:46)

if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. (5:22)



# Luke and Paul

unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did. (Luke 13:5)

I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such [works of the flesh] will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:21)

Do you not now that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? (1 Corinthians 6:9)

He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)



# Hebrews

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt. (6:4-6)



# Revelation

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. (21:8)

if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (22:18)



# 1 Thessalonians

- ✦ God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. (5:9-11)



# Repentance

- ✦ “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.”  
Mk 1:15
- ✦ “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.” Lk 15:21





# Forgiveness

- ✦ “My friend, your sins are forgiven you.” Lk 5:20
- ✦ “her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love... Your sins are forgiven.” Lk 7:47-48.





- ✦ “And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.” Matt 6:12.



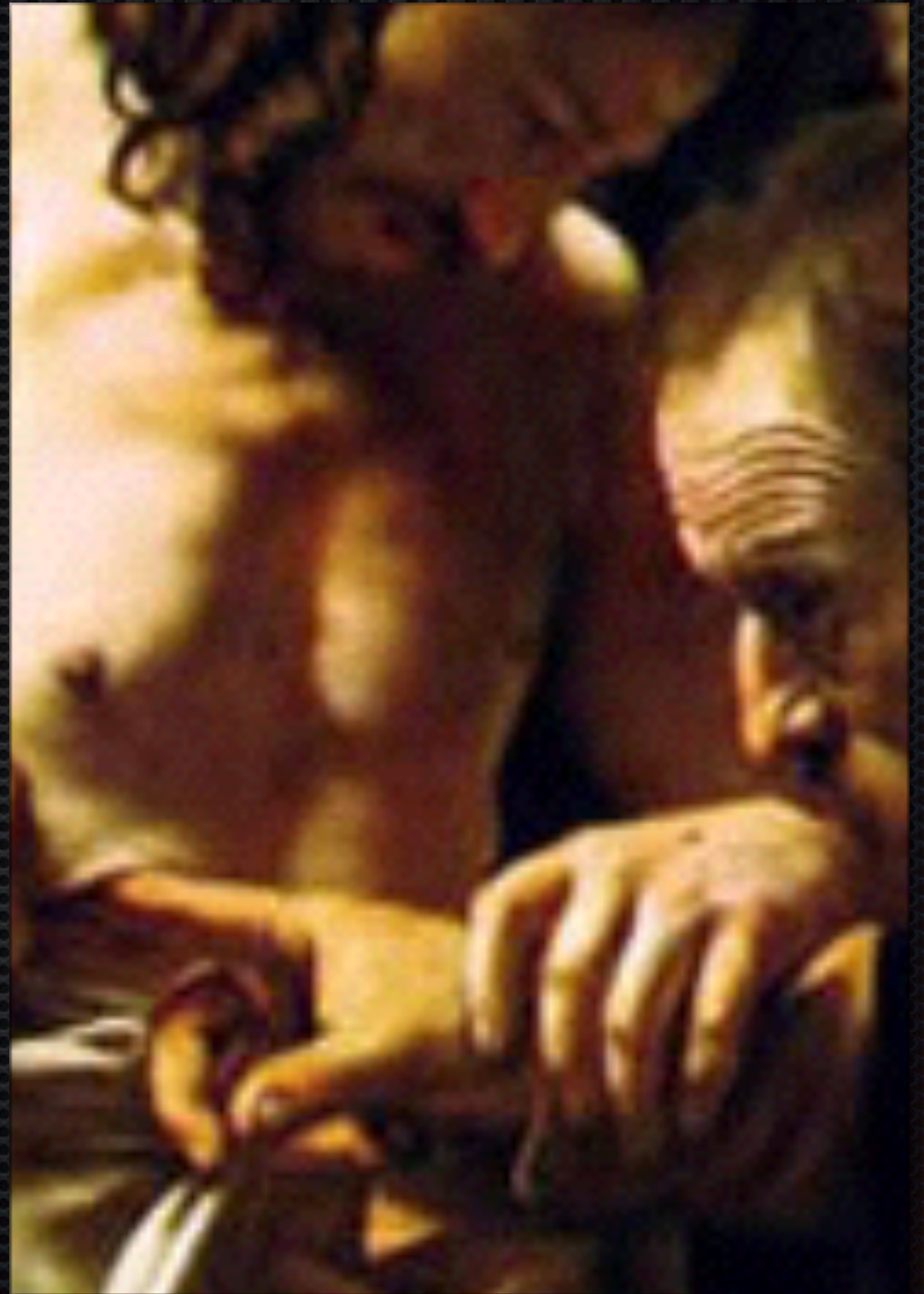


- ✦ [Jesus said to Peter,] “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt 16:19)
- ✦ [Jesus said to the disciples,] “In truth I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt 18:18)



# John 20:21-23

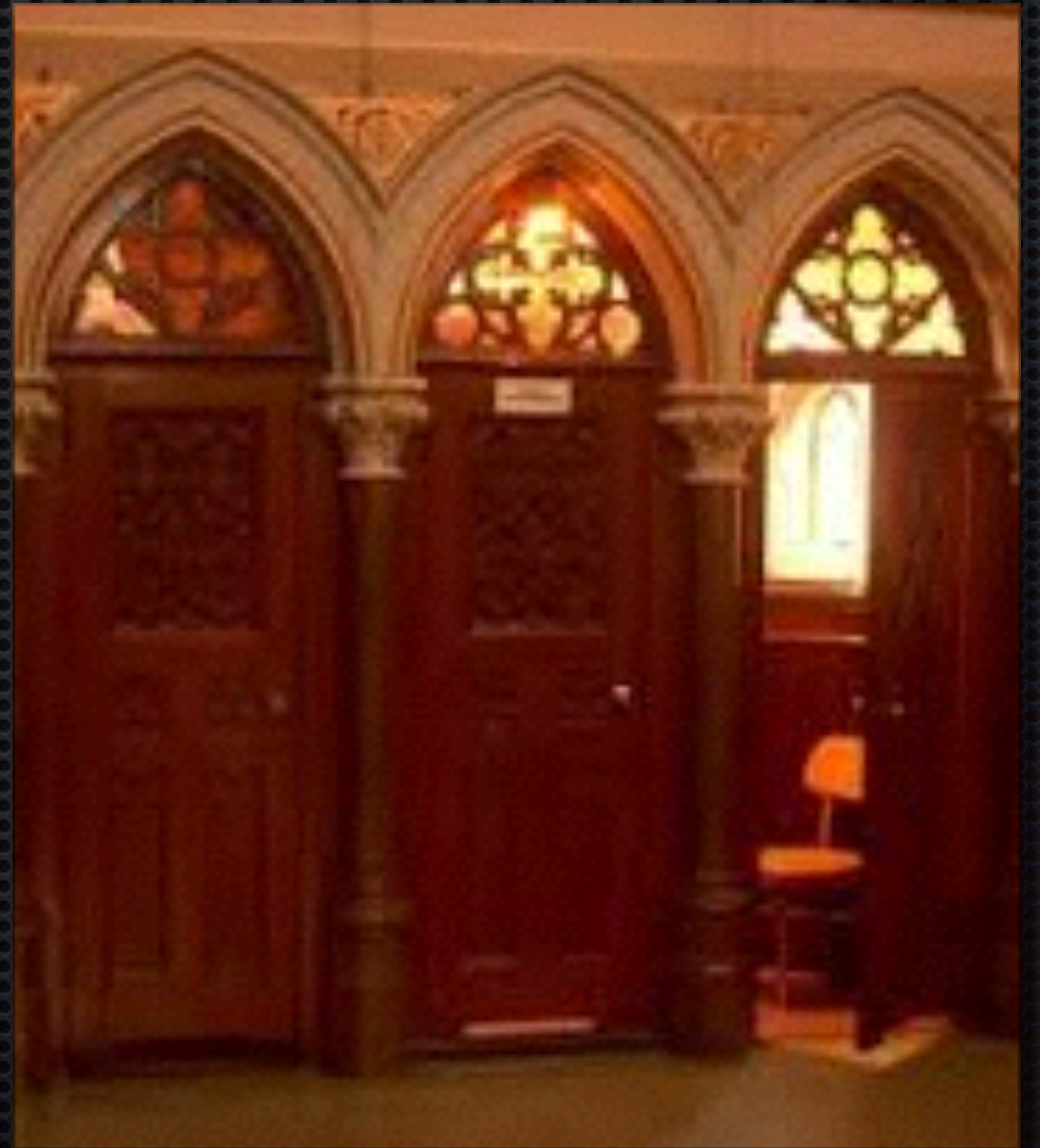
[Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”





# Some trends in the Church

- ✦ Reduced numbers
- ✦ Quality still very good
- ✦ Popularity of communal penance services





# Changing sense of sin

- ✦ People less likely to obsess over small sins
- ✦ Increased awareness of God's mercy
- ✦ Confession seen unnecessary for small sins
- ✦ Busy with other things in their lives
- ✦ More comfortable confessing to God than to a priest



- ✦ People don't consider themselves sinners
- ✦ Advertising encourages people to pamper themselves
- ✦ Job market encourages self-confidence
- ✦ Feeling of victimization
- ✦ *Humanæ vitæ*

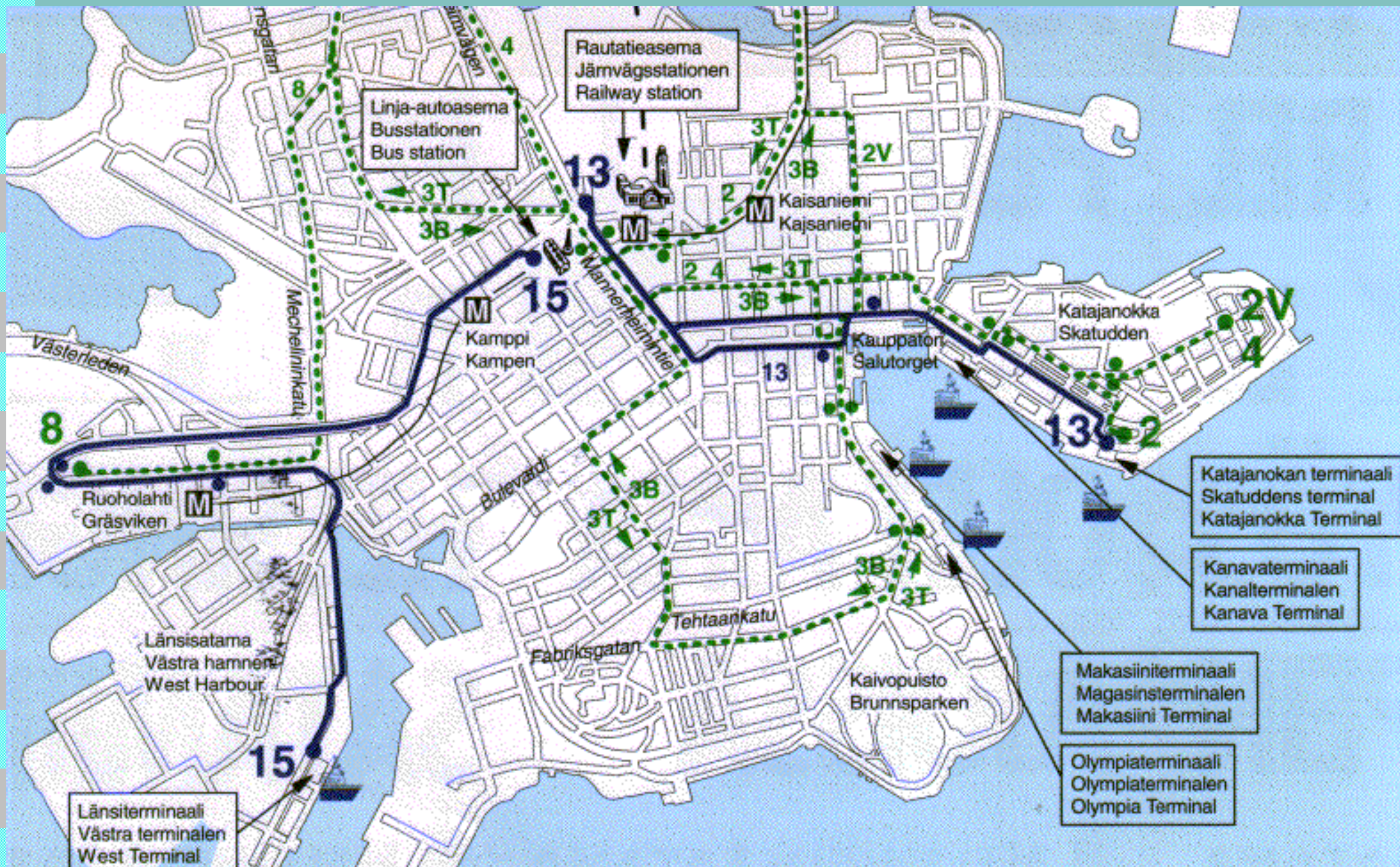


# Foundational beliefs

- ❖ God has standards for human behavior
- ❖ People can recognize God's will
- ❖ God predestines no one for evil
- ❖ People have the freedom to sin, yet God grants the grace of repentance









# Getting to know grace

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
  - “Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons [and daughters], partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.” (1996)
  - “Grace is participation in the life of God.” (1997)
  - “This vocation to eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God’s gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself.” (1998)



# Types of grace (CCC cont.)

- “Sanctifying grace is...a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love.” (2000)
- “Actual graces... refer to God’s interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.” (2000)
- “There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments.” (2003)
- “There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms... intended for the common good of the Church.” (2003)



# Summary on grace

- Participation in the life of God
- Coming at God's initiative
- A free gift
- Already at work in us



# ■ Recall a story of grace

- Calling you
  - to change
  - to repent
  - to turn life around
  - to seek reconciliation
  - to recognize sin and the good already present



---

# ■ Personal sin

---

- What is sin?
- How do you recognize it?



# Catechism of the Catholic Church

- “Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity.” (1849)



# ■ Personal Sin

- You're in a car on the expressway going 150 KPH.
- **ARE YOU SINNING?**



---

# ■ Evaluating sin

---

- What am I doing?
- Why am I doing it?
- How am I doing it?



# CCC 1855

- ❖ *Mortal sin* destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him.
- ❖ *Venial sin* allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it.



# CCC 1857

- ❖ For a *sin* to be *mortal*, three conditions must together be met: “Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.”



# Social sin

- John Paul II: Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance, December 2, 1984
- Sin is always a personal act of freedom
- External factors and personal conditions may lessen guilt, but freedom remains



# ■ Meanings of social sin

- The effect of each one's sin on the community
- A specific sin against someone's person, freedom or honor
- Relationships between communities, classes or nations
- The accumulation of personal sins



# ■ How we participate in social sin

- Actions or omissions that support evil
- Actions or omissions that exploit evil
- Failure to avoid, eliminate or limit evil
- Saying “There’s nothing I can do”
- Saying “I don’t want to be bothered”
- Saying “I’ll get in trouble if I try to stop it”



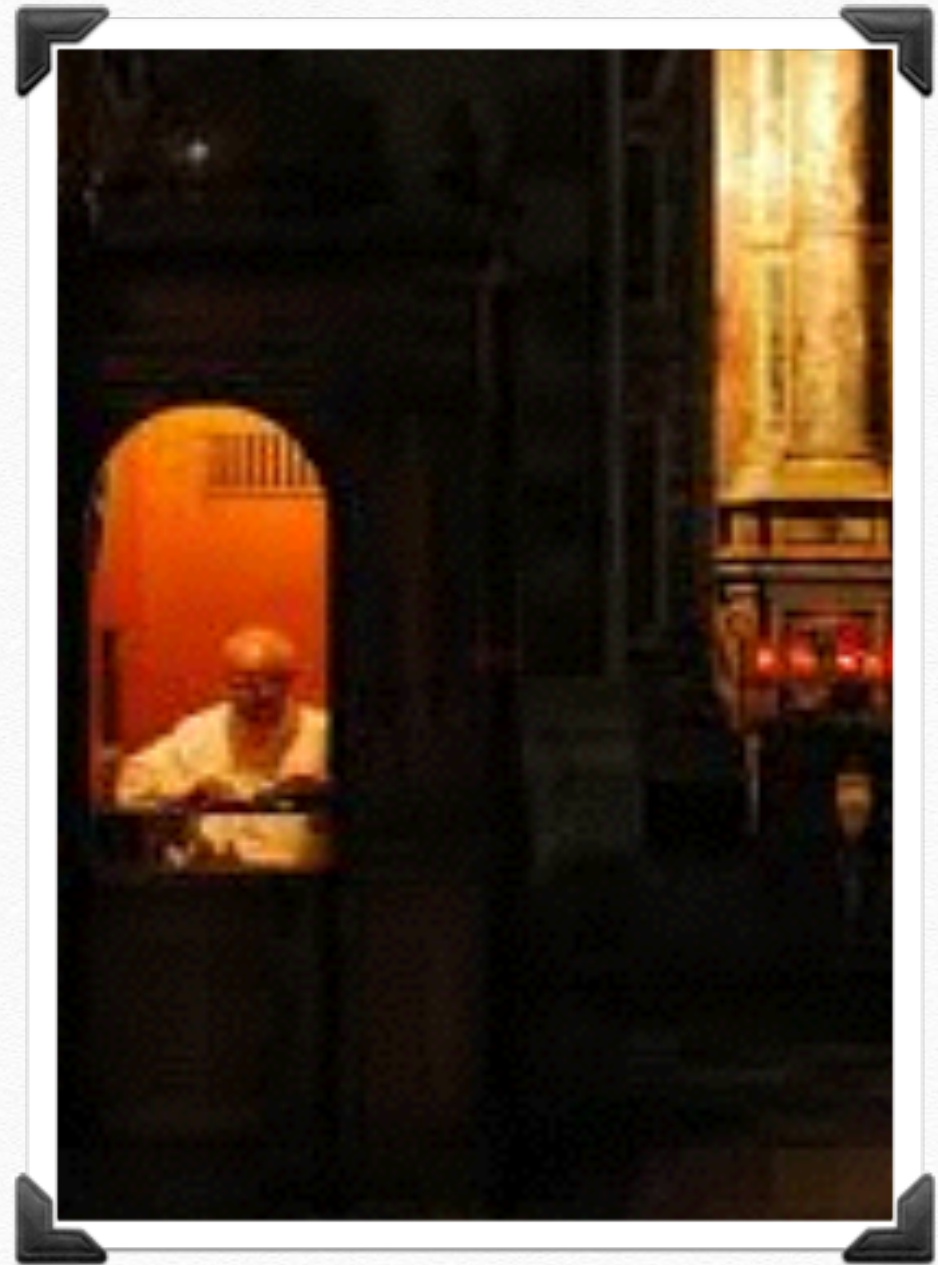
# Justice and reconciliation

- Justice pertains to individuals and to society
- Charity helps specific needs
- Social justice works at systems
- We are all called to deeds of reconciliation with individuals and groups



# History of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- ❖ Conversions did not eliminate all sin
- ❖ Receiving forgiveness once in a lifetime
- ❖ *Shepherd of Hermas*
- ❖ *Apostolic Tradition*, bishop forgives
- ❖ 3rd Synod of Toledo (589), repeated forgiveness





- ✦ 6th c. Irish/Anglo-Saxon forgiveness by a priest, but other ministers, occasions
- ✦ 9<sup>th</sup> century Irish monks
- ✦ Order of penitents
- ✦ Tariff penance

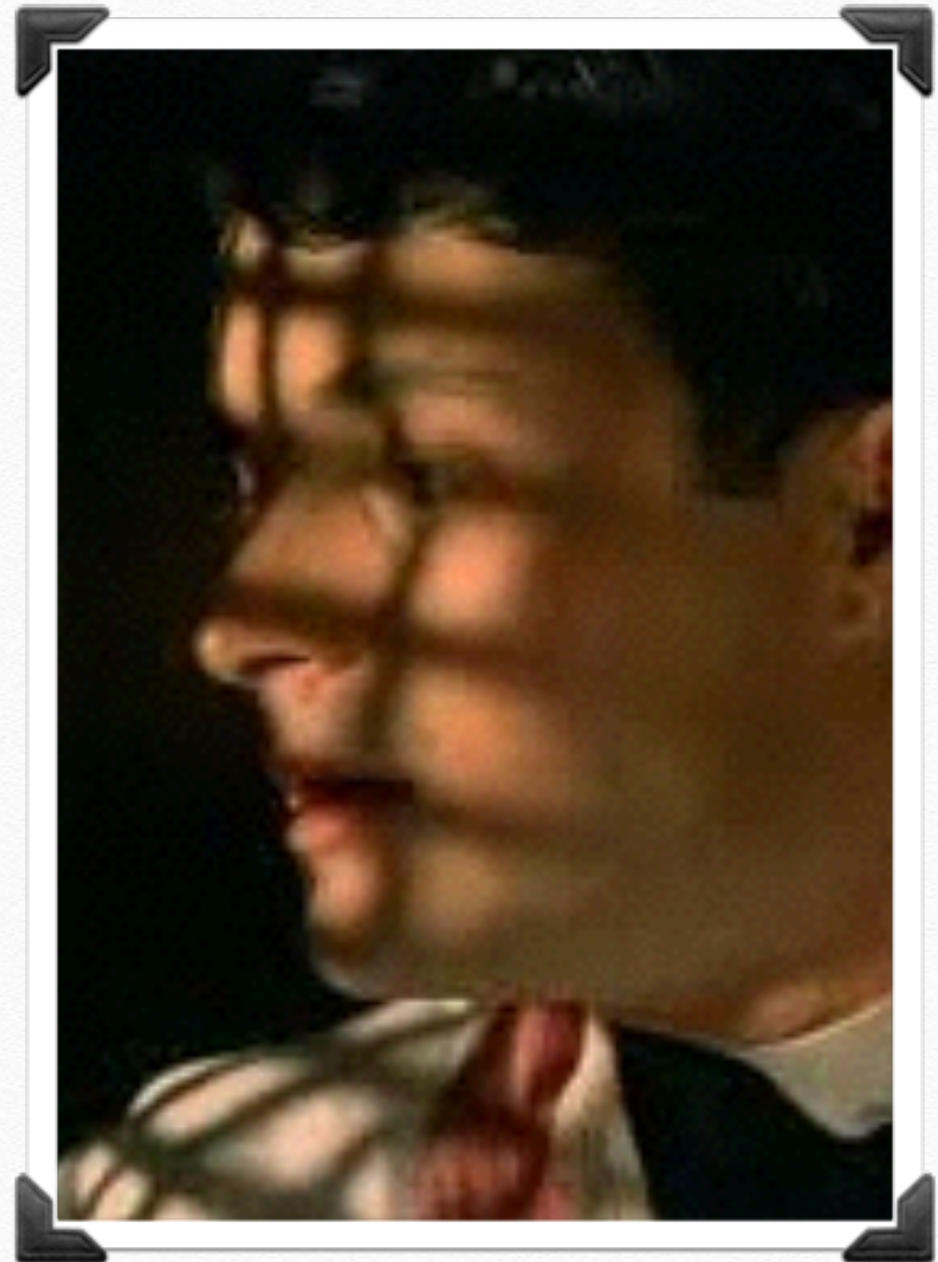


- ❖ Fourth Lateran Council 1215 required penance each year from age of discretion
- ❖ 13th c. the penitent confesses, God forgives, the priest absolves
- ❖ consistently the need to say “I’m sorry” and to hear “You are forgiven.”



# Ecclesial decisions

- ❖ Critique of unworthy ministers
- ❖ Calls for reform
- ❖ Luther: internal penitential disposition, but favored a form of confession based on gospel
- ❖ Trent: God's grace justifies the sinner, we respond





- ❖ The penitent reconciles with the Church, and also with God
- ❖ Penitential services developing before Vatican II
- ❖ Three forms of the revised rite
- ❖ Revised formula for absolution: anamnesis, petition, declaration



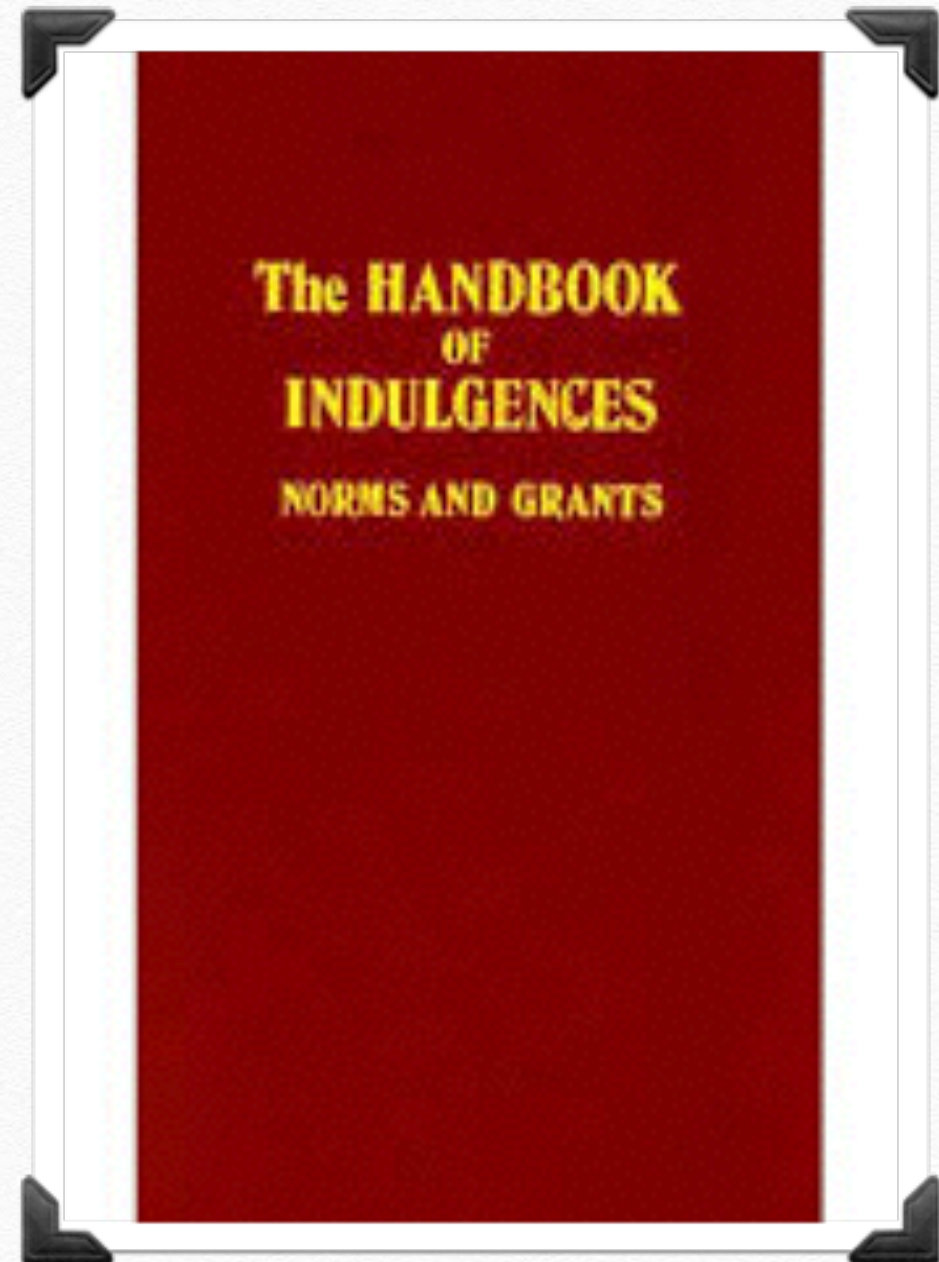
❖ God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father,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

❖ Amen.



# Indulgences

- ❖ Removal of guilt but some consequences of sin may remain - suffering and inclinations to sin again
- ❖ Release from works of penance through substitute action - led to abuses
- ❖ Paul VI: distribution from the Church's treasury





# Code of Canon Law 992

- ❖ An indulgence is the remission before God of temporal punishment for sins whose guilt is already forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful gains under certain and defined conditions by the assistance of the Church which as minister of redemption dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.



# Canons 993-994

- ❖ An indulgence is partial or plenary insofar as it partially or totally frees from the temporal punishment due to sins.
- ❖ Any member of the faithful can gain partial or plenary indulgences for oneself or apply them to the dead by way of suffrage.



# Names for the sacrament

- ✦ Reconciliation
  - ✦ Still a popular title
  - ✦ Implies more than a sad confession of sin, but a happy result
  - ✦ Sets an ideal for human relationships
- ✦ Confession
  - ✦ Also still common
  - ✦ Especially appropriate when people feel sense of sorrow
- ✦ Penance - the title of the entire rite



# Lumen Gentium 11

- ✦ “Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from the mercy of God for the offence committed against Him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their conversion.”





# Rite of Penance 6

“Inner conversion embraces sorrow for sin and the intent to lead a new life. It is expressed through confession made to the Church, due expiation, and amendment of life. God grants pardon for sin through the Church, which works by the ministry of priests.”





# a) Contrition

- ✦ The most important act of the penitent is contrition, which is “heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more” [Council of Trent].





# b) Confession

- ✦ The sacrament of penance includes the confession of sins, which comes from true knowledge of self before God and from contrition for those sins.





# c) Act of Penance

- ✦ True conversion is completed by expiation for sins committed, by amendment of life, and also by rectifying injuries done.





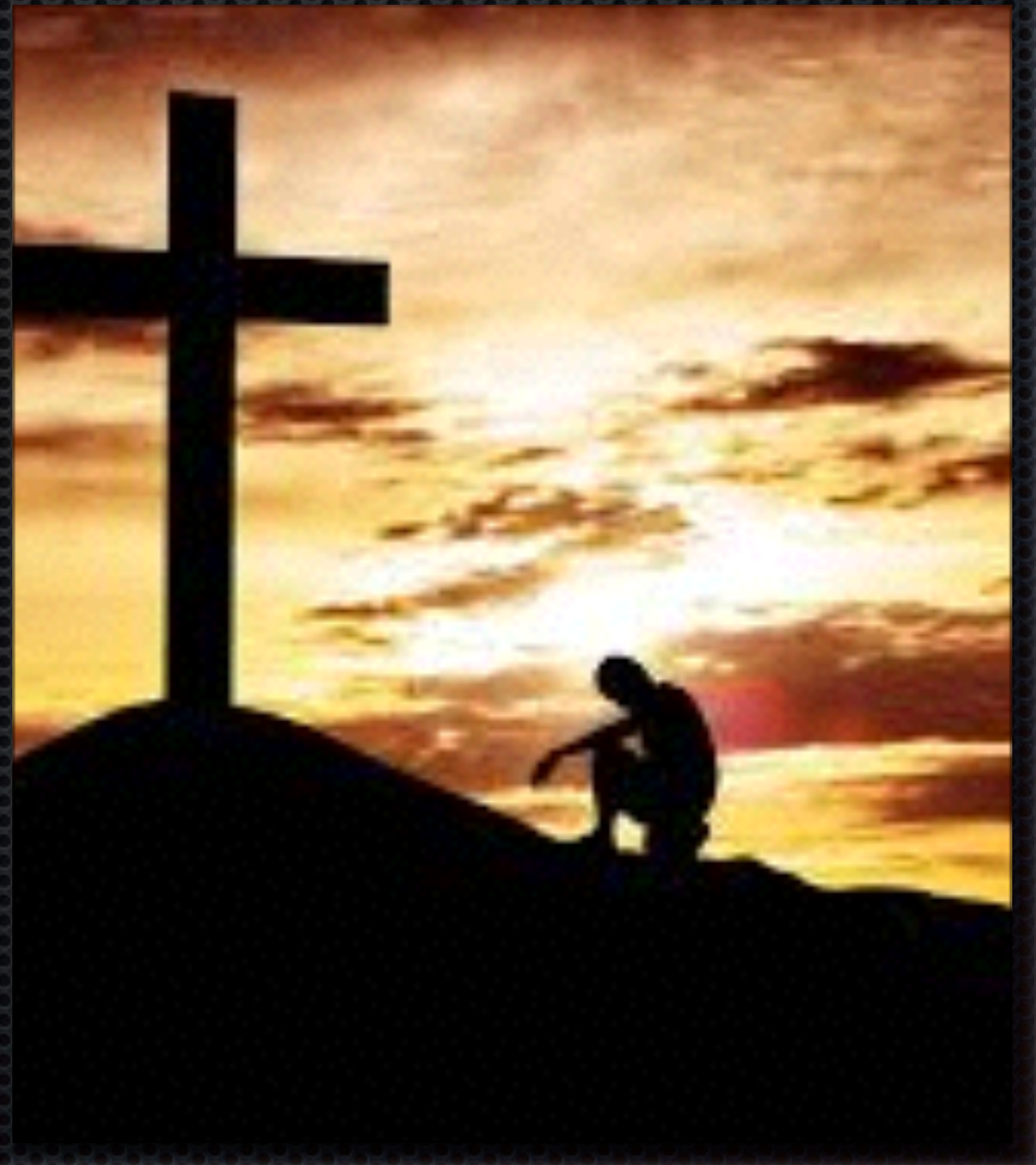
# d) Absolution

- ✦ Through the sign of absolution God grants pardon to sinners who in sacramental confession manifest their change of heart to the Church's minister; this completes the sacrament of penance. For in God's design the humanity and loving kindness of our Savior have visibly appeared to us and so God uses visible signs to give salvation and to renew the broken covenant.



# Role of the community (8)

- ✦ the Church calls sinners to repentance by preaching the word
- ✦ it also intercedes for them
- ✦ and helps penitents confess their sin to obtain the mercy of God





# Minister of the sacrament (9)

- ✦ The Church exercises the ministry of the sacrament of penance through bishops and priests. By preaching God's word they call the faithful to conversion; in the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit they declare and grant the forgiveness of sins.
- ✦ Conscious that he has come to know the secrets of another's conscience only because he is God's minister, the confessor is bound by the obligation of preserving the seal of confession absolutely unbroken.



# PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: ONE IN CHRIST

- The rights of people with disabilities to full participation in the local Church community includes ready access to the Sacraments.... it needs to be stated clearly that they are not to be denied the Sacraments, and that readiness to celebrate the Sacraments is to be measured by their capacity to understand, even if in some cases that awareness is minimal.



# PENANCE

- Strictly speaking only those in serious sin are obliged to seek absolution in the Rite of Reconciliation. However all are encouraged to be reconciled in the Sacrament of Penance for less serious sins. Persons with disabilities, therefore, have the same rights as others in this matter.





- Instruction of the penitents is to be in keeping with their capacity. Confessors should make sure that the setting is appropriate for wheelchairs, and that visual and auditory aids are also provide.... If the person has difficulty communicating, the priest might use... questions that invite a "yes" or "no" answer. It is possible for the deaf to use sign language or to write out their sins, or even to use a language interpreter of their choice who is thereby obliged by the seal of the confessional.



# First Form

- ✦ Anonymous v Face-to-face
- ✦ Welcoming the Penitent
  - ✦ Informal greeting
  - ✦ Sign of the cross
- ✦ Opening words of mercy`
- ✦ Reading of the Word of God (Optional)
- ✦ General confession of sins



# First Form

- ✦ Confession of specific sins
- ✦ Conversation
- ✦ Giving and accepting of penance
- ✦ Prayer of the penitent
- ✦ Absolution by the priest
- ✦ Proclamation of Praise of God
- ✦ Dismissal



# Second Form

- ✦ Introductory Rites
  - ✦ Antiphon
  - ✦ Sign of the Cross
  - ✦ Greeting
  - ✦ Introduction
- ✦ Invitation and prayer
- ✦ Celebration of the Word of God
  - ✦ Readings
  - ✦ Homily



# Second Form (cont. - Rite of Reconciliation)

- ✦ Examination of conscience
- ✦ General confession
- ✦ Introduction and Lord's Prayer
- ✦ Priest's conclusion to Lord's Prayer
- ✦ Individual confession
- ✦ Individual absolution
- ✦ Hymn of thanksgiving



# Second Form (cont.)

- ✦ Concluding Rite
  - ✦ Concluding prayer
  - ✦ Blessing
  - ✦ Dismissal



# Third Form

- ✦ Introductory Rites
- ✦ Instruction
- ✦ General confession
  - ✦ General formula
  - ✦ General absolution
  - ✦ Hymn of praise
  - ✦ Blessing and dismissal



# Strategies for improving participation

- ✦ Encourage people to come
- ✦ Speak of your own experience
- ✦ Stress the value of dialogue and hearing words of forgiveness (e.g. Prodigal Son conclusion)
- ✦ Stress the assurance of forgiveness



# Strategies for improving participation

- ✦ Try different time slots
- ✦ Use the seasonal gatherings
- ✦ Be a good confessor
- ✦ Explain how you like to hear confessions
- ✦ Stay positive



# Helping the Kids

- ✦ Be clear about preparation
  - ✦ How to examine conscience
- ✦ Be clear about celebration
  - ✦ What follows what in the rite
- ✦ Be clear about afterwards
  - ✦ Completing the penance
- ✦ Be clear about what it all means
  - ✦ God forgives and we change