

Scripture

It was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'.

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'.

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'.

John 20:19-23

Prayer

*Father,
all powerful and ever-living God,
we praise and thank you
through Jesus Christ our Lord
for your presence
and action in the world.*

*In the midst of conflict and division,
we know it is you who turns our minds
to thoughts of peace.*

*Your Spirit changes our hearts:
Enemies begin to speak to one another,
those who were estranged
join hands in friendship,
and nations seek the way of peace
together.*

*Your Spirit is at work
when understanding puts an end
to strife,
when hatred is quenched by mercy,
and when vengeance gives way
to forgiveness.*

*For this we should never cease
to thank and praise you.
We join with all the choirs of heaven
as they sing for ever to your glory.*

Preface of Eucharistic Prayer II
for Reconciliation

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**Liturgy
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ENGLAND
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Consecrated for Worship



Where sin has
divided and scattered,
may your love
make one again;
where sin has
brought weakness,
may your power
heal and strengthen;
where sin has
brought death,
may your Spirit
raise to new life.

Rite of Penance: Opening Prayer (99)

The Place of Reconciliation

Celebrating God's Mercy

The Church has two forms of the Rite of Penance for use in normal circumstances. The first form is that of individual confession and reconciliation. The other usual form of the Rite is that of communal services of penance and reconciliation. These are most commonly celebrated in parishes during Advent and Lent. Such communal celebrations take place in the main body of the church with suitable spaces identified for individual confessions which should also be in visible areas but without the possibility of confessions being overheard. At least one of these spaces should give penitents an alternative to celebrating the sacrament other than face-to-face with the priest.

The place of celebration

The reconciliation chapel is an important place for the Christian's encounter with Christ. As a liturgical space, it should express what it means to encounter the mercy and love of God, to be reconciled with the community of the church even when not in use. It should be clearly visible within the church.

The arrangement of the place of celebration

The Rite of Penance may be celebrated either face-to-face or with the penitent separated from the confessor by a curtain or grille. A proper reconciliation room or other space should be established for the celebration of the sacrament of penance which is suitable for both these options.

Child protection guidelines recommend that the setting for reconciliation of children should be in a place where both priest and child may be seen but not heard and this arrangement is probably suitable for other penitents also. Access should be open to all, including those in wheelchairs and with hearing difficulties. The ancient option of celebrating this sacrament at the presider's chair might be considered. Other possible solutions include providing glass panels in the doors,

or a window through which the priest and penitent may be seen; the provision of more than one door, so that neither priest nor penitent may be trapped inside; the provision of a 'panic button' so that help may be summoned if necessary.

Practicalities

When a penitent enters the reconciliation chapel he or she should not be faced with the priest at once; the choice of celebration belongs to the penitent. For face-to-face, there should be chairs for priest and penitent, a suitable distance apart, so that the priest can extend his hands over the head of the penitent (RP 19), but not so close that either feels in any way uneasy. It should be possible for the penitent to sit or kneel and to rise afterwards. A grille or curtain arrangement should also be provided with a kneeler or chair.

Other things to consider include:

- easy access and provision for people with disabilities;
- soundproofing: a reconciliation chapel should be soundproofed for confidentiality; carpet will also contribute to the absorption of sound;
- the provision of natural light, if possible;
- the use of good quality furnishings in natural materials, which give dignity and importance to the rite;
- suitable art: a crucifix or an icon, not set up as a shrine or altarpiece but as a focus for prayer or reflection.
- the reconciliation chapel should not be used for other things, such as storage.

