

Coming Back Together

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Sin always disrupts relationships. With sin there is no such thing as “It did not hurt anyone else.” Mortal sins are actions that we think about, that we know are serious and do anyway, and that rupture our relationship with God and the Church community. Often they also kill relationships with others and ourselves. While venial sins, or lesser offenses, such as not telling

the truth, gossiping, cheating on a test or in a game, may not totally break our relationships with God and the Church community, often they wound or weaken those relationships.

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation means to resolve, to reunite, to bring together, to restore our oneness with God and others. When the word is used in reference to people, it implies that something has gone awry in what was once a harmonious relationship. Reconciliation takes place when through the action of one or both of the people the relationship is restored. The hostility and separation are gone. The unity is restored. The wound is healed.

Though humans enter the world with original sin, the sacrament of Baptism cleanses us from sin and restores the union of life that is shared in Jesus Christ. However, because we are created in God’s image with the gift of freedom, we do at times freely choose to turn away from God, others, and sometimes ourselves. We sin. Our actions disrupt the harmony of union with God in Christ.

Lent is a time to take a hard look at sin in our lives. It is a time to admit our sinfulness, to ask for forgiveness, and to make changes and to come back again to God. The parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father (see Luke 15:11–32) is a story of reconciliation and coming together that mirrors God the Father’s willingness to welcome us back into full relationship with him. Through the sacrament of Penance, also called reconciliation or confession, we are called to reconcile our rela-

tionship with God. The sacrament of Penance gives us a fresh start. Through the confession of sin to an ordained priest and the receiving of absolution, harmony is restored with God and the Christian community and we are strengthened to live more faithfully and give witness to others about God’s abundant love.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are the attitudes, habits, or actions that you frequently engage in that wound or disrupt your relationship with God or others?
- Why is the celebration of the sacrament of Penance such an important part of Catholic life?

ACTIONS TO TAKE

- Set aside some time each day during Lent to examine the areas of disharmony in your life.
- Find out when the sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated in your parish during Lent and plan to participate in it.
- If there are persons in your life from whom you are estranged, take the necessary steps to begin a process of reconciliation with them. **R**

SCRIPTURE CORNER

Matthew 6:9–14; Luke 15:11–32; John 20:19–23

Read and reflect on these passages. How do they enrich your understanding of reconciliation?

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