

## **Day 154 – Friday, August 21**

How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today by Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M., S.T.D.  
(continued)

But are Catholics required to go to confession? The current law of the Church states that a person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess (Canon 916). Think, for example, of the parable of the prodigal son. The boy who had cut himself off from the life of the family was now to be readmitted to the daily family table. He admitted his fault and asked forgiveness. Yet to restore the son's place, a special celebration of reconciliation and homecoming was needed. "Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found" (Luke 15:23- 24).

For those Catholics who have cut ourselves off from God and the Church by serious (grave, mortal) sin and now wish to return to God's table (many Catholics find this situation rarely happens in their lives), the Church offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation to celebrate their "homecoming." This is the only time when Catholics are required to celebrate the sacrament. But we celebrate Reconciliation not merely because we have to, but because it is a sacrament—a sign and celebration of God showing forth his mercy "by reconciling the world to himself in Christ and by making peace for all things on earth and in heaven by the blood of Christ on the cross"—as we read in the very first words of the Rite of Penance.

*In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley*

Sincerely,  
Fr. Jim Kaptein