

## **Day 155 –Saturday, August 22 - Reconciliation**

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

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is not merely a time for spiritual direction (as wholesome as that is), or a time for seeking moral guidance (as necessary as that may be at times). Reconciliation is primarily a sacrament—a corporate act of worship which builds up the Body of Christ. The Church affirmed this understanding in the first document of Vatican II, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: "Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church" (#26), and "Whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be stressed that this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and, so to speak, private" (#27).

That is why, in addition to a rite for Reconciliation that is individual (one penitent and one priest), the new rite offers communal rites for the celebration of the sacrament. Many Catholics have moved from individual confession to these communal celebrations. In parishes across the United States we can find large numbers of Catholics participating in the communal Sacrament of Reconciliation, especially before Easter and Christmas. Communal celebrations show more clearly that Reconciliation is a sacrament, a corporate act of worship. When we celebrate together as a parish family, we are reminded of the social nature of sin—that every sin, even the most private and personal sin, has implications for the larger community. In addition, when we celebrate Reconciliation with others, we are more clearly reminded of our obligation to "forgive those who trespass against us" even as we ask God to forgive us our trespasses. Interpersonal forgiveness and reconciliation are part of the hoped-for outcomes of this sacrament. Christianity stresses the relation of the "horizontal" and the "vertical"—interpersonal forgiveness and divine forgiveness. "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

*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