

Day 156 – Sunday, August 23

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

Whether one celebrates Reconciliation communally or individually, the corporate dimension of the sacrament remains. In the individual rite, the priest represents the whole Church. In either case, the sacrament has the same basic, ritual shape—a shape it receives from the Eucharist. The Eucharist is not only one of seven, it is the model and source of all the sacraments—they take not only their meaning but also their shape from the Eucharist. The external "shape" (outward sign) of the Eucharist is that of a meal. Think of a typical Thanksgiving dinner.

There are four movements: 1) we come together; 2) we tell our stories and review what has happened since we were last together; 3) we move to the table and eat; 4) then we take our leave and go our separate ways. These are the four movements of the Eucharist: 1) gathering; 2) storytelling (the Liturgy of the Word); 3) meal sharing (bringing the bread and wine to the altar, the Eucharistic Prayer and the Communion Rite); and 4) commissioning (the dismissal, announcements, etc.). The reformed rite for the Sacrament of Reconciliation has this same fourfold structure. 1) We gather and come together as a worshiping community to form the Body of Christ. 2) We get in touch with the sacred story (as revealed in Scripture), which has formed us as a people and which leads us to reform our lives and do penance. 3) We celebrate God's forgiveness for Reconciliation. 4) We turn to the world with our resolve to follow more closely in the way of the gospel, to amend our lives, do penance and sin no more. The most important thing that happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is what Jesus does.

While the examination of conscience, sorrow for sin, telling the sins to the priest and acts of satisfaction are all important elements on our part, the key to understanding the sacrament [today](#) is to focus on God's part. The Sacrament celebrates God's gift of reconciliation and peace. Four Steps in Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation Individually The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents gives many options to both priest and penitent, but it is helpful to see the rite in light of the same four movements as the Eucharist: gathering, storytelling, reconciling, commissioning.

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