

Penance: Satisfaction

- *Satisfaction (an Act of Penance)*

True conversion is achieved by satisfaction (an act of penance) for sins, by amendment of life and also by reparation of injury. The kind and measure of satisfaction should be suited to the individual penitent, so that each one may restore the order which he (she) has harmed and be cured by the appropriate medicine for the sickness from which he (she) has suffered. In the same way, the penance should be truly a remedy for sin and in some way renews his (her) life. Thus the penitent, “forgetting those things that are past” once again becomes part of the mystery of salvation and strains forward toward the things to come.

[Order of Penance]

- In confession, the Priest assists the penitent to make an integral confession, offers him (her) suitable counsel, and urges him (her) to have contrition for his (her) faults, reminding him (her) that through the Sacrament of Penance a Christian, by dying and rising with Christ, is renewed in the Paschal Mystery. Then the Priest proposes a work of penance that the penitent accepts to make satisfaction for sin and to amend his (her) life.

The priest should take care that he adapts to the penitent’s circumstances in every way, whether in the manner of speaking or even in the counsel provided. **[Order of Penance]**

- How can I better live out a life of asceticism? Or a life of merit?

- Do I feel like I need to make up for my past sins to be forgiven? Are there specific sins I can or need to atone for?

- Do I shy away from or avoid things that require attention or effort? Have I settled into a life on the easiest path?

- **SATISFACTION (FOR SIN):** An act whereby the sinner makes amends for sin, especially in reparation to God for offenses against him. The penance given by the confessor in the Sacrament of Penance constitutes such satisfaction. All true satisfaction for sin must be a participation in the satisfaction for sin made by Christ through his death on the cross. [CCC Glossary]
- Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins. This satisfaction is also called “penance.” [CCC 1459]
- **PENANCE:** Interior penance: a conversion of heart toward God and away from sin, which implies the intention to change one’s life because of hope in divine mercy. External acts of penance include fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. The observance of certain penitential practices is obliged by the fourth precept of the Church. [CCC Glossary]
- **ASCESIS:** The practice of penance, mortification, and self-denial to promote greater self-mastery and to foster the way of perfection by embracing the way of the cross. [CCC Glossary]
- The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: *He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.* [CCC 2015]
- **MERIT:** The reward which God promises and gives to those who love him and by his grace perform good works. One cannot “merit” justification or eternal life, which are the free gift of God; the source of any merit we have before God is due to the grace of Christ in us. [CCC Glossary]
- The term “merit” refers in general to the recompense owed by a community or a society for the action of one of its members, experienced either as beneficial or harmful, deserving reward or punishment. Merit is relative to the virtue of justice, in conformity with the principle of equality which governs it. [CCC 2006]
- What part of this evening most challenges me? Why?