

St Thomas Aquinas Parish

Reconciliation and Healing

Advent is a wonderful time to celebrate the reconciling love and the healing graces our Lord offers us. Like all religious experience, it takes preparation.

Preparing

Reconciliation is what God does. We prepare for it by opening ourselves up, by reflecting upon the areas in our lives into which God so deeply desires to shine a light. It might begin with the simple question: Where might God be offering me forgiveness and healing?

If my answer is, "I don't know," then I have some reflection to do. I can examine my life - what I have done and what I have failed to do - and see what graces are offered me there. I can look at each of my responsibilities - as a neighbour, an employee, a member of a parish or as a parent or a spouse or as a son or daughter.

God always reveals us to ourselves, so that God might reveal to us our need for a Saviour. The focus is on God's reconciling, healing love. As John says, "*God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life. Real love isn't our love for God, but God's love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.*" 1 John 4:9-10

Celebrating Reconciliation

Reconciliation is what God does. Receiving it and celebrating it is what we do. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a most natural way to celebrate God's reconciliation. We used to think of this sacrament as only about "confession" - one of the great recoveries in our Christian history is to re-discover the meaning of this sacrament.

It is God who forgives. And God forgives us the very moment that we come to the experience that we need forgiveness (which itself comes through God's grace). At that moment, I feel sorrow and a desire for forgiveness and healing. In that moment, I am reconciled with God. The reunion, the bond, the connection, the joy are all there. Three more things remain: to receive it deep within my heart, to celebrate it, and to participate in the healing process.

When I experience God's forgiveness and love, I am invited to savour it and let it touch me deeply. Experiencing compassion, patience, understanding, and forgiveness is itself transforming. If I fail to appreciate what I have just received - freely and undeserved - then I will take it for granted and risk moving on without a real healing happening.

Then, I need to celebrate the reconciliation I have received. In the Sacrament, my personal journey is joined with the mystery of God's saving love, as seen in the scriptures, and in God's desire to save us all. There, in ritual form (even if it is just me and the priest) I "step forward" and admit that I am a sinner, express my sorrow, and I name the places in my life where God is shining a Light into what I have done and what I have failed to do. Then, God's forgiveness is proclaimed "out loud" - for me to hear and rejoice in: "May God grant you pardon and fill you with God's peace."

An integral part of the reconciliation involves the healing process. Part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to seek and practice a "remedy" or "medicine" for the healing I desire.

Often that will simply be prayer. Often, expressing my gratitude to God is one of the most important steps on the road to recovery from my independence from God. Sometimes, I will need to practice a therapy that is more carefully planned - making choices about what I can practice doing and what I can practice avoiding.

May our Lord grant us all the gift of reconciliation and may we all receive it and celebrate it well in the holy days ahead.

***Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit your people.
We await your coming. Come, O Lord.***

https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/reconciliation_advent.html



Reconciliation will take place on Tuesday,
20th December at 7.00pm, St Thomas Aquinas
Parish

Everybody is welcome