302 Reconciliation Of Individual Penitents (First Form)

302 RECONCILIATION OF INDIVIDUAL PENITENTS (FIRST FORM)

302.1 OPPORTUNITY AND TIME FOR CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT IN THIS FORM:

302.1.1 Opportunity:

Every parish shall offer ample opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in the individual form.

Procedure:

While the custom of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance on Saturday afternoon is acknowledged, various opportunities other than just prior to the Saturday evening Mass should be explored.

302.1.2 Time:

When a parish schedules the Sacrament of Penance just prior to the celebration of Mass, both priests and penitents should be given adequate time to prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist. For this reason, confessions between closely-spaced Masses should be avoided. Regularly scheduled confessions between Sunday Masses is not permitted.

302.1.3 Conflict with Mass: The Sacrament of Penance shall not be celebrated while a Mass is being celebrated in the same place.

302.2 PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS:

302.2.1 Area for Reconciliation: Ordinarily, the Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents shall be celebrated either in a confessional or a reconciliation room. Confessionals or other suitable arrangements which ensure anonymity of the penitent shall be provided.

302.2.2 Reconciliation Room:

Every parish church and place of worship where confessions are regularly scheduled must make provision for at least one reconciliation room, which provides the penitent with all the options of the Rite.

Procedure:

A reconciliation room is, by definition, a physical setting which provides the penitent with all the options of the Rite (i.e., both face-to-face and fixed screen for anonymity). Attention should be given to its size, furnishings, proper lighting, ventilation, acoustics and liturgical symbols. It is not to be used for any purpose other than the celebration of all the sacraments.

302.3 CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT:

The Sacrament of Penance is a liturgical act of worship. Church law requires penitents to mention all serious sins, committed after baptism, both number and kind, of which they are aware and which have not yet been acknowledged in individual confession and submitted for individual absolution.

302.3.1 Form of the Sacrament:

So that this form may be clearly understood as an experience of ecclesial and liturgical prayer, the Word of God should be included in the individual form of the sacrament.

302.3.2 Proper Garb for the Confessor:

The confessor may follow the custom common in the United States of

wearing a stole over an alb, or a cassock and surplice, or a clerical suit.

302.3.3 Role of the Confessor:

Respecting the personal style in which the penitents choose to confess their sins and discern the movements of the Spirit in their lives, the confessor shall assist them to make a complete confession.

302.4 PENANCE AND ABSOLUTION:

301.4.1 Penance:

A penance shall be assigned by the priest or mutually agreed upon by confessor and penitent, and should be appropriate for the individual.

301.4.2 Absolution:

The Church's official words of absolution, as found in the Rite of Penance, must always be said.

302.5 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

Those with disabilities, who may need additional help making a good confession, are to be included in parish celebrations of the sacrament of Penance or in celebrations in small communities of faith that are flexible and responsive to a wide range of needs. The celebrant should accommodate the special needs of the individual penitent within the confines of church law.

302.5.1 The Penitent:

Only those who have the use of reason are capable of committing serious sin. As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound mental disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability.

302.5.2 Unique Circumstances:

In the case of individuals with poor communication skills, sorrow for sin is to be accepted even if this repentance is expressed through some gesture rather than verbally. In some cases where verbal communication is limited, there are a variety of aids/tools that the penitent can use to assist her or him in the confession process.

302.5.3 Autism:

The National Catholic Partnership for Persons with Disabilities recently developed a mobile app for persons with severe Autism who are unable to speak. The penitent is able to tap on a picture that represents their sin and show it the priest. In posing questions and in the assignment of penances, the confessor is to proceed with prudence and discretion, mindful that he is at once judge and healer, minister of justice as well as of mercy (Canons 978, § 1; 979; 981).

302.5.4 Deaf Catholics:

The following options are available for deaf Catholics receiving the sacrament of penance:

Sign Language: Catholics who are deaf should have the opportunity to confess to a priest able to communicate with them in sign language, if sign language is their primary means of communication.

Interpreter:

They may also confess through an approved sign language interpreter of their choice (Canon 990). The interpreter is strictly bound to respect the seal of confession (Canons 983, § 2 and 1388, § 2).

Written Confession: When no priest with signing skills is available, nor sign language interpreter requested, Catholics who are deaf should be permitted to make their confession in writing. The written materials are to be returned to the penitent or otherwise properly destroyed.