

Celebrating Reconciliation

Resources for Advent Penitential Service – Form II

1. Preparation

- Letting people know
- Hospitality
- Preparation of the Environment
- Visual focus

2. Resources

including texts

- Introductory Rites
 - Song – Music Suggestions
 - Greeting
 - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Readings
 - Homily
 - Examination of Conscience
- Liturgy of Reconciliation
 - General Confession of Sins
 - Individual Confession & Absolution – Music Suggestions
 - Proclamation of God’s Mercy – Music Suggestions
 - Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving
- Concluding Rite
 - Blessing
 - Dismissal
- As people leave

Appendix

- Readings – further suggestions

It may be helpful to read this material in conjunction with the following resources (www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources):

- Resources for Parish Liturgy Groups —Rite of Reconciliation
- Celebrating Reconciliation Together

1. Preparation

Letting people know

It is helpful to give people as much notice as possible of the date and time your parish's Advent celebration of the Rite of Penance. People's diaries get very full towards Christmas. The sooner they know when the service is going to be, the sooner it will be in their diary and the more likely they are to be able to take part.

Some people prefer to attend Reconciliation Services elsewhere than in their parish. It might be appreciated if local parishes shared information of when each was holding their services, and put the details of the time and place of all local services in their newsletters and on notice-boards in good time.

In addition to times of the communal Penance services it can be useful to give details of times when priests will be available for individual confessions. If priests are able to celebrate the sacrament in languages other than English putting details of which languages they can celebrate in will be of great advantage to those for whom English is not their first language. Especially helpful will be details of those priests locally who are able to celebrate in British Sign Language.

Hospitality

Much will be done to ensure that the Liturgy itself is welcome and sensitive to the needs and circumstances of those present. However first impressions are also very important. A simple and quiet ministry of welcome – perhaps just a word of welcome or greeting, and handing a copy of the service sheet – can make such a difference, especially if someone is coming to a Penitential service for the first time for many years, perhaps even after many years away from the Church.

Preparation of environment

The decoration of the Church should be both sensitive to the liturgical season of Advent and expressive of the sacrament of reconciliation. The liturgical colour purple is associated with both these. It may be possible to use the church lighting effectively — be aware of health and safety though.

Flowers may be used in decorating the Church, but the General Instruction of the Roman Missal says that in Advent flowers are to be used in moderation. The use of evergreen boughs would be especially appropriate, for both season and sacrament.

If the parish has an Advent wreath it should be lit for this as for all Advent liturgies.

The principal liturgical focus for decorating the church should be the ambo, from where God's word is proclaimed.

Because of the connection between the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Baptism (Penance has sometimes been called the second baptism, or the baptism of tears) it would be appropriate also to decorate the font, and the holy water stoups.

Consideration should also be given to the places for individual reconciliation. They should be clearly designated and in a discrete space with thought given to how people will approach. If people's confessions are to be heard seated it would be suitable to place a low covered table at each position, with an open bible, a crucifix and a lit candle. These candles could be lit from a central candle at the beginning of the time of Individual Confession. If people's confessions are being heard standing it is generally more difficult to decorate the place, but if they are being heard in a side chapel or

another such place something will be possible. Beware of placing candles on the floor where people will be standing, it is very easy for clothes to catch fire accidentally.

Visual focus

During the time for people's confessions period most people will be in their seats for most of the time. There will be music and song to support them in their prayer, but a visual focus can also be of assistance. This might be provided by a large crucifix, or statue or icon.

Alternatively it might be something more directly linked to the action of confession and absolution. Those who have been absolved might be invited to light a candle and place it on a stand in front of the altar –in which case make sure that there is plenty of space for the number of candles that will be lit. Candles placed too close together can melt and the molten wax ignite. In any case make sure that you have at hand a CO₂ fire extinguisher, and someone who knows how to use it, just in case. Another, and perhaps safer option, is to have a large bowl with lighted charcoals and invite those who have received absolution to take a few grains of incense and scatter them over the charcoals. The charcoals will need replenishing every ten minutes or so, but that should be no great inconvenience.

2. Resources

Introductory Rites

Song

A song accompanies the beginning of the celebration. The song should express themes of the season and of the celebration including the scripture readings. Gospel procession

Two possible ways of beginning:

- Procession of Ministers. The Gospel Book carried in procession and placed on the altar.
- In some communities it may be appropriate to start in a more subdued way. People and Ministers gather as a simple chant is sung. All stand when the priest celebrant enters, on his own.

*Music suggestions*¹

However the liturgy begins the music should assist, for example: a strong proclamation of the love of God for us to accompany a procession of ministers; a quiet chant calling on God's mercy for a more subdued beginning.

Advent — in the latter half of Advent (after 17 December) the focus of the liturgy shifts to more direct preparation for the Lord's birth. Many Advent themes will be suitable: be prepared; the Lord coming to save his people; waiting. In most parishes Services of Reconciliation take place on a weekday evening — check that the chosen music is not a 'morning song'.

Penance — Hymns, songs and chants about penitence, reconciliation and mercy but also about God's love for us, hope and trust in God and the Church gathered. Consideration should be given to the use of a psalm text. If not being used for the Liturgy of the Word one of the Common Psalms for Advent (see below) would be suitable. The rite also suggests using a sung Kyrie or Lord have mercy — some settings would work better in this context than others

Psalm 15 (16)	Grant to us, O Lord
Psalm 18 (19): 8–11	Hail to the Lord's anointed
Psalm 22 (23)	Jesus, thou art coming
Psalm 24 (25)	Litany of the Word (Advent Litany)
Psalm 26 (27)	Lord of life, we come to you
Psalm 41–42 (42–43)	Love divine, all loves excelling
Psalm 50 (51)	My soul in stillness waits
Psalm 84 (85)	O come divine Messiah
Psalm 90 (91)	O come, O come Emmanuel
Psalm 102 (103)	O comfort my people
Psalm 129 (130)	O Lord, be not mindful
Psalm 138 (139)	O Lord, hear my prayer
	On Jordan's bank

¹ The music suggestions are offered as examples rather than as an exhaustive list. They are taken from the three hymn books in common use: *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone*, *Laudate* and *Liturgical Hymns Old and New*.

The Benedictus (Luke 1: 68–79)

—————
Across the years
Bless the Lord, my soul
Come, thou long-expected Jesus
Come to set us free
Creator of the stars of night
Do not be afraid
God to enfold you

Ostende nobis, Domine
Praise to you, O Christ our Saviour
Rorate Caeli — Come Saviour, come
There is a longing
There's a wideness in God's mercy
Turn to me
Wait for the Lord
Word made flesh
You are mine

Sign of the Cross

Greeting

Grace, mercy and peace
from God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son
be with you in truth and love.
R. And also with you,

Greeting 52:3

Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God,
you have brought us together in the name of your Son
to receive your mercy and grace in our time of need.
Open our eyes to see the evil we have done.
Touch our hearts and convert us to yourself.
Where sin has divided and scattered,
may your love make one again;
where sin has brought weakness,
may your power heal and strengthen;
where sin has brought death,
may your Spirit raise to new life.

Give us a new heart to love you,
so that our lives may reflect the image of your Son.
May the world see the glory of Christ
revealed in your Church,
and come to know
that he is the one whom you have sent,
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

Amen.

Opening Prayer 54:5

Liturgy of the Word

One or more readings may be chosen. If more than one are read, a psalm, another suitable song, or a period of silence should be inserted between them, so that the word of God may be more deeply understood and heartfelt assent may be given to it. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from the gospel. (RP 24)

Readings can be taken from the Lectionary, either for the Season of Advent (Volume 1) or the Rite of Penance (Volume 3 (also found in *Rite of Penance*)). The readings of the day might be considered.

The following readings are suggested for an Advent Service of Reconciliation. Further suggestion can be found at the end of this document.

Suggestion for Advent

Reading 1 Isaiah 40: 1–5. 9–11
Prepare a way for the Lord

Lectionary Volume 1: p. 27

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 24
To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Lectionary Volume 1: p. 950

Reading 2 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4: 2
May the Lord confirm your hearts in holiness when Christ comes

Lectionary Volume 1: p.9

Gospel Luke 3: 10–18
What must we do?

Lectionary: Volume 1: p. 52
Book of Gospels p. 219

Homily

The homily is based on the texts of the readings and should lead the penitents to examine their conscience and renew their lives (RP 56)

Examination of Conscience

An Examination of Conscience is not always necessary. It may be more appropriate to follow the homily with a period of silence.

Liturgy of Reconciliation

General Confession of Sins

Structure

1. *I confess...* introduced by the deacon or other minister
2. Penitential Intercessions
3. Lord's Prayer
4. Brief concluding prayer led by priest.

Based on Fifth example

Deacon or minister My brothers and sisters, confess your sins and pray for each other, that you may be healed.

All: I confess...

Deacon or minister Jesus Christ in his mercy pardons our offences against God and reconciles us with the Church we have wounded by our sins, Let us pray to him, the victor over sins and death.

Lord Jesus, be our salvation

R. Lord Jesus, be our salvation

You came from God as our wisdom and justice, our sanctification and redemption.

Though you were rich you became poor for our sake, so that by your poverty we might become rich.

You came into the world to save sinners.

You gave yourself up to bring redemption to all.

You destroyed death and gave light to life.

You will come to judge the living and the dead.

You became the source of salvation for all who obey you.

You came into the world to seek and save what was lost.

You were sent by the Father, not to judge the world but to save it.

You invite all who labour and are burdened to come to you to be refreshed.

You told us that the whole law depends on love of God and of our neighbour.

Jesus, source of all life, you came into the world to bring us to the fullness of life.

Jesus, eternal truth, you give us true freedom.

Jesus, you are the way to the Father.

Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life; those who believe in you, even if they are dead, will live.

Deacon or minister Now, in obedience to Christ himself, let us join in prayer to the Father, asking him to forgive us as we forgive others.

All sing or say together:

Our Father...

The priest concludes

Lord,
draw near to your servants
who in the presence of your Church
confess that they are sinners.
Through the ministry of the Church
free them from all sin
so that renewed in spirit
they may give you thankful praise.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

Individual confession and absolution

During individual confessions - Incense rite (see above)

Music during the time of Individual Confession.

The music at this time should not be thought of as just 'filling' to help the time pass more pleasantly. It needs to be carefully prepared, and carefully performed.

In essence it is music for a procession; to accompany people on a journey. The predominant musical form is likely to be simple chants either a repeated ostinato or short refrain with verses by cantor or choir. Certainly a variety of approaches can be taken to bring a certain variety to a time during which not a lot is happening, publicly. The variety can be in the types of song - chants, hymns; solo pieces and choir, as well as congregational. It can also be in the contrast between sung pieces and instrumental pieces.

Where music accompanies texts these must be carefully chosen to complement the scriptures of the celebration, and the focus of the homily. That way they can support all that has preceded and be of assistance to those preparing for their confession or reflecting on it. Music groups that simply sing, 'everything that we know under "Reconciliation" in the hymn book index' can inadvertently do the congregation a disservice.

During Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that reflects the character of this season, but does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. (GIRM 313)

There is value in Instrumental music in that it does not have words, and allows more space for a congregation to continue with its own thoughts and prayerful conversation with the Lord. It may well be that on such an occasion there may be additional music resources that can be called on. Some very able and willing musicians may be available for such services who, for a variety of reasons, may not be able to commit to being part of a regular music group for Sunday worship. Making use of their services can reduce the demands on the more regular musicians, make good use of the various talents within the community, and bring different sounds to this celebration.

Some of the suggestions for the Opening Song will be suitable.

Settings of Psalm 141
Healer of our every ill
Jesus, heal us
Misericordias Domine
Nada te turbe
Silent, surrendered
Take this moment
Take, O take me as I am
Ubi Caritas

Exhortation

The presider invites all present to offer thanks and encourages them to do good works which will proclaim the grace of repentance in the life of the entire community and each of its members.

Proclamation of Praise for God's Mercy

The rite specifically recommends scriptural texts for this proclamation of praise. Many parishes will have suitable settings of these texts — a selection from the 15 texts in the Rite is offered below. Other pieces with a similar theme may be used.

Psalm 97
Psalm 99
Psalm 102
Psalm 135
Psalm 144
Psalm 145
Isaiah 12: 1b–6
Daniel 3: 52–57
Luke 1: 46–55 — The Magnificat

Blest be the Lord
City of God
Fling wide the gates
Hail to the Lord's anointed
Lo, he comes with clouds descending
Now thank we all our God
Thanks be to God
The King of glory
The voice of God

Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord God,
creator and ruler of your kingdom of light,
in your great love for this world
you gave up your only Son
for our salvation.
His cross has redeemed us,
his death has given us life,
his resurrection has raise us to glory.
Through him we ask you
to be always present among your family.

Teach us to be reverent in the presence of your glory;
fill our hearts with faith,
our days with good works,
our lives with your love;
may your truth be on our lips
and your wisdom in all our actions,
that we may receive the reward of everlasting life.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen

Concluding Rite

The blessing

May the Father, bless us,
for we are his children, born to eternal life.
R, Amen

May the Son show us his saving power,
for he died and rose for us.
R. Amen

May the Spirit give us the gift of holiness
and lead us by the right path,
for he dwells in our hearts.
R. Amen

Dismissal

The deacon or other minister or the priest himself dismisses the assembly:

The Lord has freed you from your sins.
Go in peace

All respond
Thanks be to God.

As people leave

The celebration of the rite of Penance is the beginning of a new period in a person's life, in which they try to live even more faithfully according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. To keep them mindful of what they have committed themselves to, it can be helpful to give a prayer card as a reminder of the celebration. Such cards can be easily produced using DTP facilities in the parish and might usefully include the principal scripture reading from the Liturgy of the Word. The holders of the copyright of the Jerusalem Bible (the version of the Scriptures in the present Lectionary) allow the reproduction of up to 500 words free of charge and without application, subject to the card bearing the following copyright line:

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Some Scripture Cards for Advent 2004 are available on the Liturgy Office website

Appendix

Other readings from the Lectionary for Rite of Penance

First Reading

Deuteronomy 30: 15–20

See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster.

Lectionary 3: p.120

Isaiah 2.6, 15–18

I have nourished and educated sons; however they have rebelled against me (Ox and ass)

Isaiah 55.1–11

*Why spend money of what is not bread,
your wages on what fails to satisfy?*

Lectionary 3: p.132

Isaiah 56: 1–3. 6–8

My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Lectionary 1: p. 63

Isaiah 58: 1–11

*If you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the
darkness, and your shadows become like noon.*

Lectionary 3: p.133

Malachi 3: 1–7a

The Lord whom you seek will come to his temple.

Rite of Penance Appendix 2: 11

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 29: 2. 4–6. 11–13 r. 2

I will praise you, Lord you have rescued me.

Lectionary 1: p. 62

Psalm 71: 1–2. 7–8. 12–13. 17

In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails

Lectionary 1: p.25

Psalm 84: 8–14 r.8

Let us see, O Lord, your mercy

Lectionary 1: p.950

Psalm 102: 1–4. 8. 10 r. 1

My soul, give thanks to the Lord

Lectionary 1: p.39

Psalm 138

*O Lord, you search me and you know me
or O search me, God and know my heart.*

Lectionary 3: p. 160

It may be advisable to select verses from the 10 provided.

Psalm 145: 6–1 r. cf Is 35.4

Come, Lord, and save us.

Lectionary 1: p. 47

Second Reading

Romans 13:11-14
Our salvation is near.

Lectionary Volume 1: p. 4

Or Romans 13: 8-14

Lectionary 3: p.166

Ephesians 5.1-14

You were once in darkness; now you are light in the Lord, so walk as children of God.

Lectionary 3: p. 169

1 John 1.5-10; 2.1-2

God is light; there is no darkness in him at all

Lectionary 3: p. 176

1 John 2.3-11

Whoever hates his brother remains in darkness.

Lectionary 3: p. 177

Revelation 21.1-8

He will wipe away all tears from their eyes

Lectionary 3: p.182

Gospel

Matthew 3.1-12

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.

Lectionary 1: p. 25; 3: p 183

Matthew 5.13-16

Let your light shine before men.

Lectionary 3: p.185

Matthew 25.31-46

What you have done to the very least of my brothers, you have done to me.

Lectionary 3: p. 189

Luke 19.1-10

Today salvation has come to this house.

Lectionary 3: p. 196

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One series of resources supporting the Rite of Penance prepared by the Liturgy Office. www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources