

4. What resources are made available to the following people to assist them with their present needs?
 - a) Parents whose children are preparing to celebrate the sacrament for the first time, but have themselves very little direct experience of the sacrament.
 - b) Adults preparing for their own Christian initiation?
 - c) Adults who wish to deepen their participation in the sacrament, or related processes of spiritual development?

Thinking about Reconciliation

a reader for priests and people

This series offers an oversight of reconciliation in the liturgical life of the Church. It offers individuals a broader perspective on reconciliation than is provided in other Liturgy Office resources which are specific to the Rite of Penance itself. The text includes extensive quotations from the Rite of Penance and other Church documents, and series of questions to encourage personal engagement with the material.

The parts of Thinking about Reconciliation are listed below. They can be downloaded from the Liturgy Office website: www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources.

Part One: *The Mystery of Reconciliation in the History of Salvation*

Part Two: *The Mystery of Reconciliation in the Sacraments*

Part Three: *The Church, the sinner and society*

Part Four: *The Rite of Penance*

Part Five: *Preparing for and celebrating the Rite of Penance*

Appendix A:

Two sets of additional questions. The first is intended for those who wish to review current parish and/or deanery practice in the light of the Rite, and the second for those who wish to reflect on *Thinking about Reconciliation* as a group.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A

I. Questions to help review parish/deanery practice in the light of the Rite

Questions to help review current practice in a single parish

1. Section 1 of the 'Introduction' to the *Rite of Penance* places celebrations of the Rite firmly in the context of the mystery of salvation. This same mystery is evoked in the opening words of the Absolution:

*God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and resurrection of his Son
has reconciled the world to himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins...*

What indications are there in the celebration of the sacrament in your community of this broader context to an individual penitent's turning from his or her sins?

2. Section 2 of the 'Introduction' to the *Rite of Penance* makes the connections between the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Penance.

In what ways might these connections be made more clear for the people of your community?
3. The social and ecclesial dimensions of sin and penance features strong in the 'Introduction' to the *Rite of Penance*, (e.g. *RP* 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 19, 22, 36 and 37).

In what ways are these presently explored in your parish's celebrations and catechesis? Are there ways in which they might be still more effectively brought out?

4. In considering the ministry of Penance the 'Introduction' to the *Rite of Penance* first gives consideration to the ministry of the whole Church, c.f. *RP* 8.

In what ways does your Community express its part in this ministry? Are there ways in which its responsibilities and opportunities to fulfil this role might be made clearer?

5. The revision of the *Rite of Penance* placed new emphasis on the place of God's word in people's preparation for the sacrament and in its celebration (c.f. *RP* 4, 17, 24, 25, 26, 36).

In what ways does this assist the penitent make their 'inner examination of heart and ... exterior accusation... in the light of God's mercy'? ('Introduction', 6b)

How might more assistance be provided to penitents in making use of the scriptures as part of their preparation for the sacrament? And in the celebration of particularly the first form of the Rite, the *Rite of Reconciliation for Individual Penitents*?

6. What resources are available in the parish to assist penitents to familiarise themselves with the various forms of the *Rite of Penance* and the various options it provides them with – e.g. prayers of sorrow?

Who is responsible for renewing the provision or varying what is provided according to the season?

7. In *Misericordia Dei*, Pope John Paul reminds that all priests are ordained to reflect the image of the Good Shepherd. In the scriptures the Good Shepherd shows special care for his sheep, tending the wounded, going out in search of the lost, to welcome them back to the fold. He urges that confessors do all they can to be available for penitents at times that are suited to the real circumstances of their lives.

What are the times presently advertised for celebrations of the *Rite of Penance* in your community during the year – both for individual and for communal celebrations? How were they

arrived at? What are their advantages/disadvantages? Might alternative arrangements be more attractive? (NB It is likely that a certain amount of consultation with people – those in work; those retired or unemployed; school-children; students; those with young families etc – would be necessary to answer this question adequately.)

How might additional provision to be made to assist those children who have celebrated their 'first reconciliation' get into the habit of regular celebrations of the sacrament – both individually and communally?

8. How fitting to its sacred purpose is your community's place of reconciliation – i.e. reconciliation chapel or room, or confessional box? Is it reserved for one purpose, or is it pressed into other alternative use? Is it kept clean and tidy? Are there art-works (e.g. a crucifix; a statue, perhaps of the Good Shepherd; an icon) to give visual expression to the saving love of God).
9. What advantages does the non-sacramental Penitential Celebration (*RP*, 36f) offer to a community? What are the opportunities for such celebrations in your community?

Questions to help consider current practice in a deanery

1. What recent positive experiences of the *Rite of Penance* are you aware of?
What circumstances promoted these positive experiences?
2. What promotes or inhibits worthy celebration of the *Rite of Penance* in the parishes of the Deanery?
3. In what ways might Deanery collaboration further assist the faithful in their celebration of the various forms of the *Rite of Penance*? (i.e. *Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents*; *Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution*; *non-sacramental Penitential Celebrations*.)
- In parishes
 - In chaplaincies
 - In other ways – e.g. Youth Days