

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 27
July 03, 2022

Thoughts on the Sacraments (7) Reconciliation of a Penitent (Confession)

Reconciliation of those who have sinned against God and their neighbor to full fellowship in the Church has been and key part of Christian practice from apostolic times and is fully endorsed by Holy Scripture. (e.g. Jn 20:22-23; Mt 18:18). In fact, Reconciliation is something we do at every Eucharist when we corporately confess our sins and receive absolution for them from or through the priest. That tends to become an empty ritual though, unless we take time before we come to church on Sunday or during the silent pause between the call to confession and the prayer itself, to examine ourselves and think about those specific things we bring to that moment, things that are weighing on our conscience. That is something I really urge you to do.

When we talk about the Confession though, as something apart from the Eucharist of the Daily Office, we are usually referring to private, individual confession to a priest. This is a practice we generally associate with the Roman Catholic Church; the image of the ‘confessional,’ the wooden stalls that one sees in RC churches. You certainly won’t find those in an typical Anglican church!

So it surprises many to learn that private confession has existed in the Anglican Church since the first Book of Common Prayer of 1549. Until now it has only been specifically provided for in the rites for the Ministration to the Sick, but it is also available to others any time the feel the need for it, and has generally taken place in the priests office.

Since the liturgical revival of the 19th Century (the Oxford Movement) however, private confessions has become common in some high church parishes – you will find confessionals in a lot of them), usually following the Roman Catholic Rite, and many people have found it useful. As a result, many modern BCPs include some provision for it including the US 1979 edition which is currently in our pews (on page 446) and in the official Philippine BCP (on page 332) which will soon be replacing it I urge you to take a look at these rites.

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July 3 Psalm. Proper 9C. Psalm 66: 1-8

Response: *O be joyful in God, all ye lands!*

O BE joyful in God, all ye lands; * sing praises unto the honour of his Name; make his praise to be glorious. Say unto God, O how wonderful art thou in thy works! * through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies bow down unto thee.

Response: *O be joyful in God, all ye lands!*

For all the world shall worship thee, * sing of thee, and praise thy Name. O come hither, and behold the works of God; * how wonderful he is in his doing toward the children of men.

Response: *O be joyful in God, all ye lands!*

He turned the sea into dry land, * so that they went through the water on foot; there did we rejoice thereof. He ruleth with his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: * and such as will not believe shall not be able to exalt themselves.

Response: *O be joyful in God, all ye lands!*

O praise our God, ye peoples, * and make the voice of his praise to be heard; Who holdeth our soul in life; * and suffereth not our feet to slip.

Response: *O be joyful in God, all ye lands!*

From page 1

The Anglican approach to private confession is “all may, none must, some should.” In other words, the only pressure to make use of the rite must come from within you!

I personally find confession very helpful, especially if you visit with your confessor a couple of times before the actual confession to talk about sin, temptation etc. and how you experience them. It’s one of the things I made sure to do once a year when on retreat, a practice I hope to resume in the near future.

SAINTS:

Thomas the Apostle. 3 July. Thomas is mentioned among the number of the Apostles in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke but it is in John's gospel that his significance is revealed. Firstly, he is heard encouraging the other disciples to go to Judæa with Jesus; then, not knowing what Jesus meant when he talked about where he was to go elicited the answer that Jesus was himself the Way. But probably most famously he was the Apostle notably unconvinced by reports of the resurrection of Jesus, causing Jesus to show him the marks in his hands and feet and side. Thomas then proclaims the words that have been described as the great climax to John's gospel by saying to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas More, & John Fisher, Reformation Martyrs. 6 July. Born in London in 1478, Thomas More studied classics and then the law, being called to the Bar at twenty-three years old. His clear honesty and integrity impressed Henry VIII and he appointed Thomas as his Chancellor. He supported the king in his efforts to reform the clergy but disagreed over Henry's disputes with the papacy, caused by the king's desire to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and to find another queen who might provide him with a male heir. Henry could stand no such act of defiance and imprisoned his chancellor in the hope that he would renege. Thomas refused to take the Oath on the Act of Succession, which declared the king to be the only protector and supreme head of the Church in England, and was executed for treason on this day in 1535, declaring that he died the king's good servant but God's first.

John Fisher was Thomas More's close friend and ally. A brilliant academic, he had substantially reformed the life of the University of Cambridge, through the wealth and influence of his patron, Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII. He was made Bishop of Rochester and proved himself to be a good pastor to his small diocese. As with Thomas, Henry VIII much admired him at first, but when he opposed the king their relationship deteriorated. Aged sixty-six and in indifferent health, he nevertheless endured the trauma of imprisonment in the Tower of London. He was executed just two weeks before Thomas on 22 July 1535.

COLLECT: *O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*