

Reconciliation

God loves each of us very much. He wants us to stay as close to him as possible. But this is not always easy to do.

The Scripture story about Adam and Eve teaches us that the first humans did something they knew was wrong. They sinned and lost their share in God's life. That first sin is called **Original Sin**. And ever since then, all people are born with Original Sin. Because of Original Sin, suffering and death came into the world. Also, people sometimes find it difficult to do what God wants.

Sometimes we do not show our love for God, others, and ourselves. We hurt others and ourselves. We choose not to follow and obey God's commandments. We sin. Sin is any thought, word, or action that we freely choose to do even though we know that it is wrong. **Sin** is a way of saying "no" to God and God's love.



CATHOLIC IDENTITY
God loved us first.

In an emergency, anyone can baptize by pouring water over the head of the one being baptized while saying, "N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Parents, doctors, and nurses may need to baptize in an emergency.

receive a share in God's life. God's life in us is called grace.

In Baptism, Original Sin is taken away. Through the waters of Baptism, we become children of God and members of the Church. The gift of grace that we receive in the sacraments is **sanctifying grace**. Grace is also at work in our daily lives through **actual grace**.

When we sin, we turn away from God and one another. But Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14). Jesus, our Good Shepherd, leads us to **reconciliation** with God and others. The word reconciliation comes from a word that means "coming back together again." Jesus leads us by showing us ways to come back together again.

Jesus gives us ways to receive God's **forgiveness**. The first way we receive and celebrate God's forgiveness is in the Sacrament of Baptism. Either we are placed in water, or water is poured over us. We become members of the Church and

Baptism washes away Original Sin.



Penance and Reconciliation

The new life of grace, received in Baptism, can be weakened by sin. Sins are different from mistakes and accidents. You can make a mistake on a test or bump into a friend by accident. These are *not* sins. But if you cheated on a test or hurt a friend on purpose, that would be different. These actions would be sins, and you would need to seek God's forgiveness and love, or his **mercy**. We ask for God's forgiveness in Penance and Reconciliation. This sacrament has many names:

- *Sacrament of Penance*. The priest gives us a **penance**, a prayer to say or an action to do that shows sorrow for our sins.
- *sacrament of conversion*. **Conversion** is turning back to God.
- *sacrament of confession*. **Confession** is the act of telling our sins to the priest in the sacrament.
- *sacrament of forgiveness*. God forgives our sins through the words and actions of the priest. This is called **absolution**.



The word *absolution* comes from a word that means “taking away.” When we receive absolution, our sins are taken away. The priest forgives our sins in the name of Jesus Christ.

- *Sacrament of Reconciliation*. We are reconciled with God, the Church, and others.

Some sins are more serious than others. These are called mortal sins. To commit a **mortal sin**, a person knows it is very seriously wrong and freely chooses to commit it anyway. Mortal sin breaks our friendship with God and turns us away from him. We no longer share in God’s grace.

Venial sin is less serious than mortal sin. Venial sin weakens our friendship with God. But we still share in God’s grace.

Any sin that we commit hurts us as well as our friendship with God and others. We should ask for God’s forgiveness for all of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance. Children who are baptized as infants must celebrate this sacrament before receiving their First Holy Communion.



A penance is a prayer or an action that shows sorrow for our sins.

Examination of Conscience

In Jesus' story about the father and son, the son was not happy or peaceful. After he spent all his money, he thought about the choices he had made. He knew that many of his choices were selfish.

We, too, should think about whether or not our choices show love for God, others, and ourselves. When we do this, we make an **examination of conscience**. As we prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance, we learn how to make an examination of conscience.



When we make an examination of conscience, we do the following:

- We ask the Holy Spirit to help us remember the choices we have made.
- We think about the ways we have or have not followed and obeyed the Ten Commandments.

God loves us as his children and forgives us.



- We ask ourselves if we have hurt others on purpose.
- We ask ourselves if there were times we could have done something good for others but did not.

Here are some questions you can ask when you examine your conscience.

Reverence for God:

- Did I take time to pray?
- Do I go to Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days?
- Did I speak God's name only with honor and praise?

Respect for Myself:

- Did I take care of my body?
- Did I give thanks for my family, friends, and all those who love me?

Respect for Others:

- Did I obey my parents and all those who take care of me?
- Did I hurt other people by what I said or did?
- Did I act with honesty?
- Did I look for ways to help others?

We prepare for the Sacrament of Penance by making an examination of conscience.



CATHOLIC IDENTITY

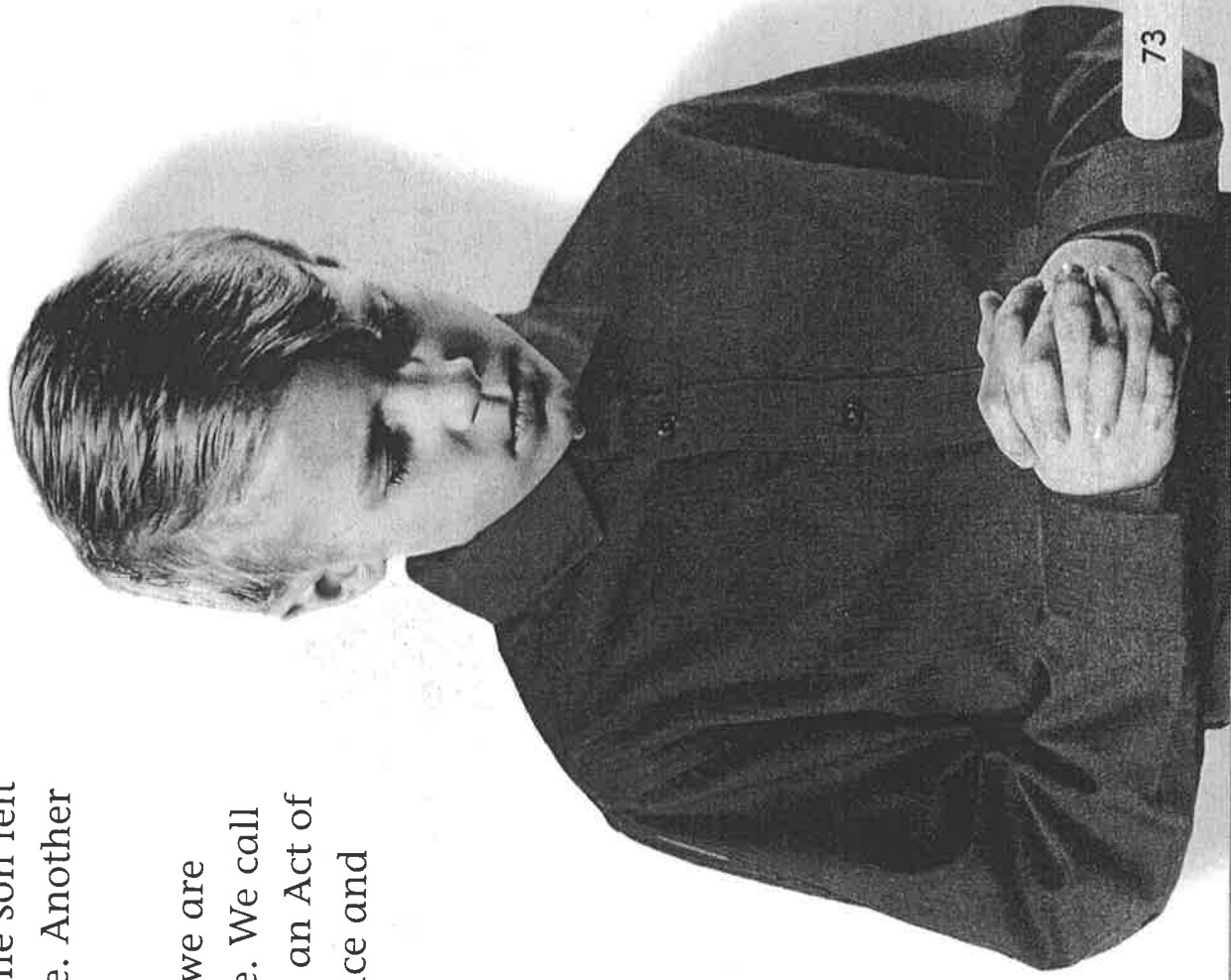
Grace is the help God gives us.

Act of Contrition

In Jesus' story about the father and son, the son felt sorrow for the wrong choices he had made. Another word for sorrow is **contrition**.

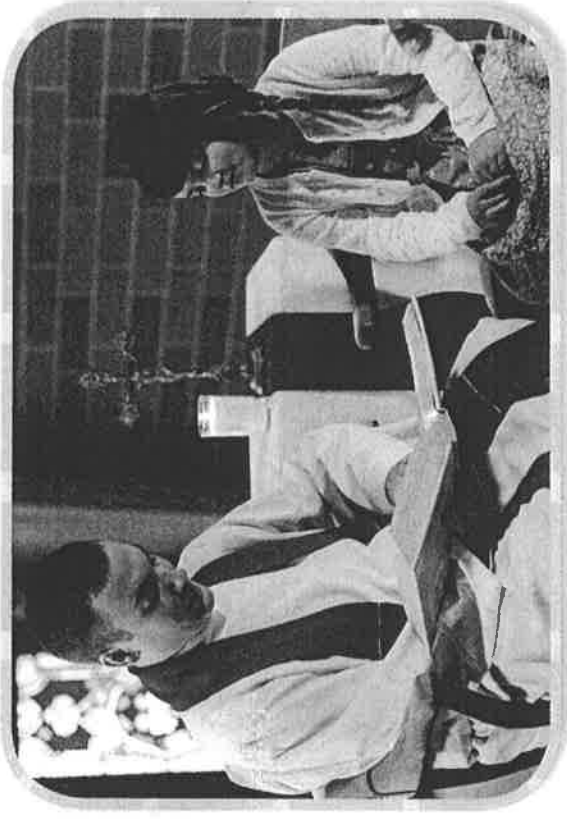
We pray a special prayer to tell God that we are sorry for the wrong choices we have made. We call this prayer an **Act of Contrition**. We pray an Act of Contrition during the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Before the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, we carefully examine our conscience. We should feel safe to confess all of our sins that we remember. We must always confess mortal sin.



Individual Celebration

Sometimes you will celebrate the Sacrament of Penance individually with the priest. Here is what happens when you celebrate the sacrament this way, in **individual confession**:



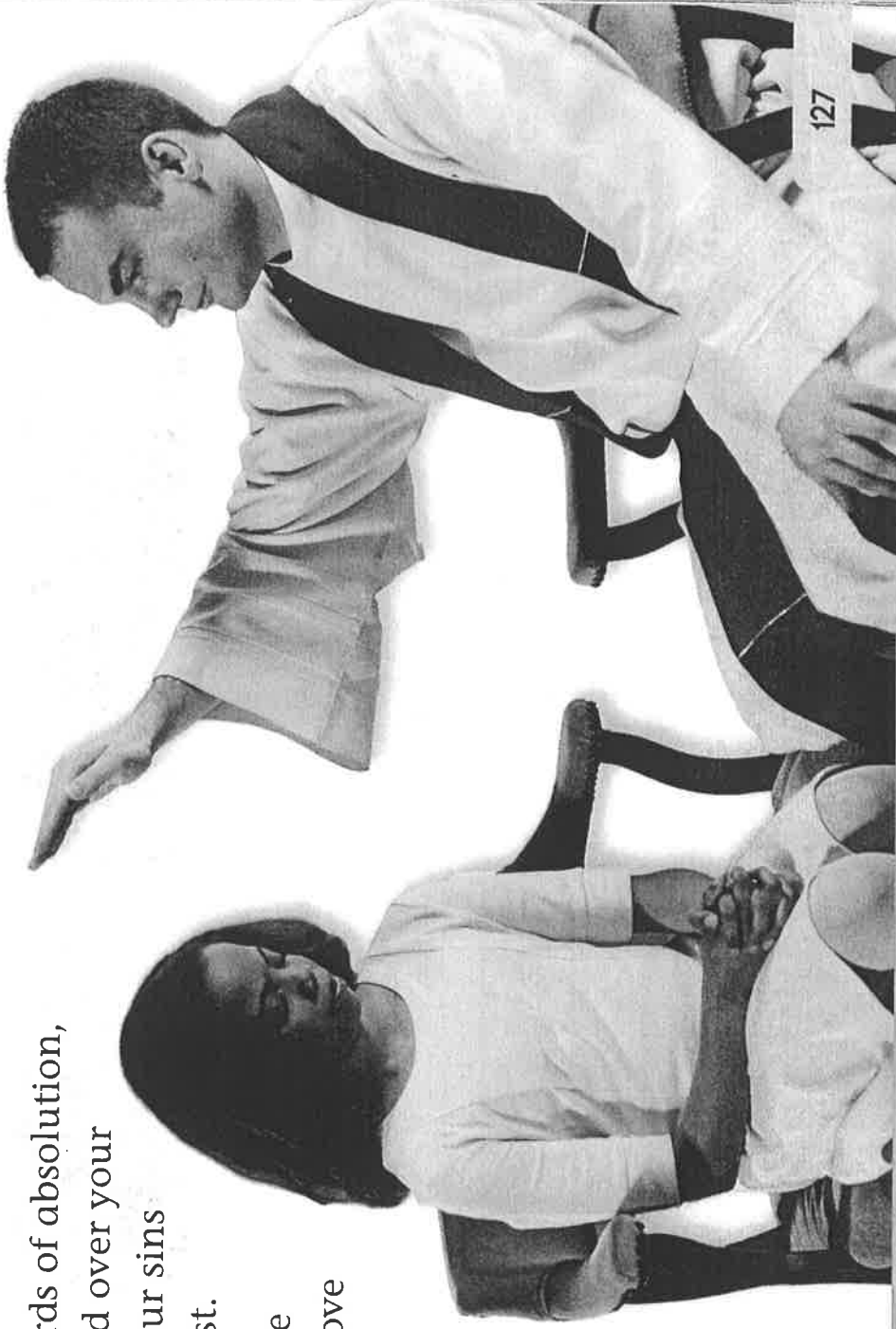
- The priest welcomes you, and you both make the Sign of the Cross.
- You listen as the priest reads a Scripture story about God's forgiveness.
- You confess your sins to the priest.
- You and the priest talk about making right choices.
- The priest gives you an act of penance. You will do your penance after the celebration of the sacrament.



Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a man becomes a priest. Many priests serve in local parishes. Priests spend their lives sharing God's love with people. They act in the person of Christ in celebrating Mass and other sacraments.

In individual confession, we confess our sins to the priest, accept a penance from the priest, pray an Act of Contrition, and receive absolution.

- You pray an Act of Contrition. You tell God you are sorry for your sins and that you will try not to sin again.
- The priest prays the words of absolution, stretching his right hand over your head. In God's name your sins are forgiven by the priest.
- You and the priest praise and thank God for his love and forgiveness.
- The priest tells you, "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace."



Forgiveness and Peace

At the end of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, the priest tells us, "Go in peace." We go in peace because our sins are forgiven. Then, as soon as we can, we do the act of penance the priest has given us. Remember, the penance may be to say a prayer or prayers. The penance may also be to do an act of kindness. When we do our penance, we show that we are sorry for our sins and want to do better.

Through the Sacrament of Penance:

- our sins are forgiven
- we are reconciled to God and to the Church
- we experience peace and comfort
- the gift of God's grace is strengthened in us.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Joy is a gift from the Holy Spirit and a sign that God is with us.



Doing a kind act as a penance shows that we are sorry for our sins.

On the night before he died, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" John 14:27).

On that same night, Jesus also promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to be their helper. The Holy Spirit came to the Church on Pentecost. God the Holy Spirit is with the Church to guide us.

The Holy Spirit helps us to spread love and peace to others, as Jesus did. **Catholic social teaching** is the teaching of the Church that calls all members to work for justice and peace as Jesus did. This Church teaching reminds us that we are all God's children. It teaches us ways to love and respect all people. As disciples of Jesus, we try to build a world of peace and justice.

We are all
God's children.



Celebrate

Works of Mercy

Corporal

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Clothe the naked.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Visit the sick.
- Bury the dead.

Spiritual

- Admonish the sinner.
- Instruct the ignorant.
- Counsel the doubtful.
- Comfort the sorrowful.
- Bear wrongs patiently.
- Forgive all injuries.
- Pray for the living and the dead.

There are Works of Mercy that help people in other ways. We share God's peace when we are patient and forgiving. And with a smile or a kind word, we can comfort someone who is sad or lonely. Jesus also taught us to pray for the needs of others.

By doing Works of Mercy, we share with others the love and peace of Jesus Christ. When we share Christ's peace and love, we help to make the world a happy and peaceful place.

