

The Sacrament of Penance

Written by W.J.Pais

Penance is a [sacrament](#) of the New Law instituted by [Christ](#) in which forgiveness of [sins](#) committed after [baptism](#) is granted through the [priest's](#) [absolution](#) to those who with [true](#) sorrow confess their [sins](#) and promise to satisfy for the same. It is called a "sacrament" not simply a function or [ceremony](#), because it is an outward sign instituted by [Christ](#) to impart grace to the [soul](#).

. As an outward sign it comprises the actions of the penitent in presenting himself to the [priest](#) and accusing himself of his [sins](#), and the actions of the [priest](#) in pronouncing [absolution](#) and imposing satisfaction. This whole procedure is usually called, from one of its parts, "confession", and it is said to take place in the "tribunal of penance", because it is a judicial process in which the penitent is at once the accuser, the [person](#) accused, and the [witness](#), while the [priest](#) pronounces judgment and [sentence](#).

. The grace conferred is deliverance from the guilt of [sin](#) and, in the case of mortal [sin](#), from its [eternal punishment](#); hence also reconciliation with [God](#),
[justification](#)

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. Finally, the confession is made not in the secrecy of the penitent's heart nor to a [layman](#) as friend and advocate, nor to a representative of [human](#) authority, but to a duly [ordained](#) [priest](#) with requisite [jurisdiction](#) and with the ["power of the keys"](#), i.e., the power to forgive [sins](#) which [Christ](#) granted to His [Church](#).

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