

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The two sacraments of forgiveness are Confession or Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick.

Reconciliation is the formal act whereby a person's sins are absolved, and they are restored to a state of grace. Remember that an Act of Contrition and the Confiteor at the beginning of Mass also forgive the venial sins in our lives.

What about mortal sin? Such is a sin that, by its nature, separates us from God's love. To be a mortal sin we must understand that it is a mortal sin and choose it freely. We must also continue in that sin without repentance. Once we have repented (made an act of perfect contrition, with the intention of going to confession) the pain of it being a mortal sin is lifted.

There is a logic to this: if a sin is mortal because it directs us away from God, then it follows that as soon as we sincerely repent and turn our hearts back to God, the pain of it being a mortal sin is lifted. We still need to go to confession, however, to sacramentally seal the forgiveness of God.

The proper candidate for Confession is any Catholic who has sinned. The proper minister is a validly ordained Catholic priest. This is because only the apostles were given authority to forgive sins by Jesus, and this apostolic authority to forgive sins resides only with the bishop (who is the successor of the apostles), and the priests to whom he grants the faculty to do so.

The proper matter for Confession is the sin and repentance of the sinner. The proper form is the words of absolution which the priest pronounces.

Reconciliation is just that. The person is reconciled to himself, to God, and to others whom he has alienated by his sin. He returns to a state of grace and is back on the road to heaven.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker