

RECONCILIATION

King David set out on a mission to be a reconciler. While he fought for the people of Israel and against Saul's family, David would win the hearts of the people of Israel for always reaching out with a hand of peace. In all of his battles, he gave dignity to those who attacked him.

Reconciliation is the call of all Christians who follow the Son of David, Jesus the Christ. Forgive one another is the command. Love your enemies! At first face, this stands against our "right" to judge and defend ourselves. David, however, is an example of a warrior who honors his enemies.

Reconciliation is sacred to Christ and to His Church. It is so sacred, that we count it among the Seven Sacraments in our Church.

Here are just a few words from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Reconciliation:

The sacrament of forgiveness

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."

1447 Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of

grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day.

1448 Beneath the changes in discipline and celebration that this sacrament has undergone over the centuries, the same fundamental structure is to be discerned. It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him. Thus the sinner is healed and re-established in ecclesial communion.

1449 The formula of absolution used in the Latin Church expresses the essential elements of this sacrament: the Father of mercies is the source of all forgiveness. He effects the reconciliation of sinners through the Passover of his Son and the gift of his Spirit, through the prayer and ministry of the Church:

***God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and the resurrection
of his Son has reconciled the world to
himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God give you pardon and peace,
and I absolve you from your sins in the
name of the Father, and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit.***



About the Power of Forgiveness

From the Producers of BONHOEFFER

Over the last 20 years the topic of forgiveness has come into its own as an area of academic study. Researchers are now examining the psychological and physical effects of forgiveness on individuals and within relationships under an amazingly wide variety of conditions, ranging from petty insults to sexual assault. Clinicians have developed interventions that help guide people through a structured process that allows them to forgive transgressions and get on with their lives.



The POWER of FORGIVENESS explores this important work and translates it into a popular, accessible documentary film for public television. The broadcast is only one part of a national outreach effort that includes a community conversation campaign, this website, a national screening tour and a companion book. The focus is on the emergent understanding of contemporary clinical and academic research that shows forgiveness is validated as having real potential for personal and spiritual transformation. At the same time the film points to the centrality of forgiveness as a virtue in many of the world's great religions and the struggle that people of all faiths have in honoring it.

The film combines character-driven stories of dramatic transgressions with those of more commonplace annoyances, examining the role that forgiveness can play in alleviating the resulting anger and grief and the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that come with forgiveness. These stories assure us that there is hope if we are open to seeking it and accepting it.

The film includes stories and interviews with people from many faith traditions: Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel on forgiveness in the Jewish faith; Azim Khamisa on forgiveness and Islam; Rev. James Forbes, pastor emeritus of Riverside Church in New York, on forgiveness from a Christian perspective. And best-selling author Thomas Moore (Care of the Soul) speaks on forgiveness from a spiritual dimension.

There are stories on forgiveness research, The Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon, building a Garden of Forgiveness at Ground Zero and the Amish teaching on forgiveness. And we hear from doctors, psychologists and psychotherapists who present the measurable benefits of forgiveness and the hidden costs of un-forgiveness.

Filming locations include New York, Pennsylvania, California, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, as well as France, Lebanon and Northern Ireland. Archival footage comes from Germany, Israel and Vietnam.

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