



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF WORSHIP

**The Revised *Order of Penance* (2023)
Pastoral Implications and Frequently Asked Questions**

Why is the Church revising the *Order of Penance*?

In the early part of the 21st century, the Holy See challenged Bishops of all nations to more authentically translate the liturgical texts to more precisely and accurately express the original Latin of each order / rite of the Church.

Most memorably, in the United States, a new translation of the *Roman Missal* was promulgated in 2011 which changed many prayer texts, including those proper to the presider and the people. The *Order of Penance* is one among many rituals of the Church undergoing the same process of retranslation and revision.

Do I have to learn a new Act of Contrition?

No. While the new *Order of Penance* adds a new option for the Prayer of the Penitent, or Act of Contrition, particular to the United States, known to many, there are ten texts presented by the ritual, and it says that not only those ten, but “similar words” may be used to express contrition.

What exactly is changing?

The presider / confessor may choose to use different options, such as the way in which the welcome of the penitent takes place or whether or not Scripture is proclaimed as part of the sacramental celebration. The most substantive change is to the prayer the priest prays over the penitent to absolve them of their sins.

When is the *Order of Penance* changing?

The revised order *may* be used as of Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023. It is not required to be used until the Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), April 16, 2023. As of April 16th, no other translation may be used.

This will allow for a period of adjustment, especially for our priests, to learn the new prayers and to become familiar with the new order.

Please note that if a penitent or priest celebrates with either the former or the revised ritual at this time, it will not affect the validity of the sacrament.

Will the revised *Order of Penance* include general absolution?

Yes and No. While there is a form of the *Order* for “Reconciling Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution” as part of the *Roman Ritual* and the English translation in the revised *Order of Penance*, it is not an order that is used frequently. In fact, most priests will never use it in the course of their ministry.

The existence of proper conditions for its use are guided by canon law and the USCCB and determined by the local Bishop. *Even though it exists in the ritual text of the Order, Bishop Fisher has not authorized its use in the Diocese of Buffalo.*

What about Advent and Lenten Penance Services?

Seasonal penance services are much more common. They may include a communal examination of conscience and a general confession of sins (e.g. “I confess to almighty God...”) leading to individual celebration of the sacrament. This is meant to culminate in communal praise for God’s mercy after all have celebrated the sacrament, and encouraged by expanded options in the revised *Order of Penance*.

Are there other questions you would like to see answered? If so, please feel free to call the Office of Worship at (716) 847-5545 or email worship@buffalodiocese.org.