



NewsLetter

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Bishop Steven J. Lopes Assumes Committee Chairmanship, Appoints Members for 2022-2025

Following the conclusion of the November 2022 USCCB plenary meeting, Bishop Steven J. Lopes of the Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter succeeded Hartford Archbishop Leonard P. Blair as the new Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship. Bishop Lopes will serve for three years, until November 13, 2025.

In his first act of business, the Chairman re-appointed five Committee members to another three-year term:

- Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City
- Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver
- Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Burlington
- Bishop John T. Folda of Fargo
- Auxiliary Bishop Timothy C. Senior of Philadelphia

Three new members were also appointed:

- Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, who previously served on the Committee from 2013 to 2019; he taught liturgy and sacramental theology at the University of Dallas and Holy Trinity Seminary before his ordination as a bishop in 2010.
- Auxiliary Bishop Mario A. Avilés, CO of Brownsville, who will also serve as the new Chairman of the Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish; he is a member of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri and, before episcopal ordination in 2018, served on its Permanent Deputation and for a time as Procurator General.
- Auxiliary Bishop Michael G. Woost of Cleveland; the newest Latin Church bishop of the USCCB (ordained in August 2022), he has taught liturgical and sacramental theology at St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland for over twenty years.

They will replace outgoing members Bishop Joseph M. Siegel of Evansville, Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Monterey, and Bishop Daniel H. Mueggenborg of Reno.

The appointment of consultants to the Committee is still being finalized and will be announced in a future *Newsletter*. However, Bishop Lopes has named Archbishop Blair, the previous Committee Chairman, as a consultant. Archbishop Blair is the USCCB's representative to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, and will therefore be able to keep the Committee apprised of developments in the work of ICEL.

Understanding the *Order of Penance*: Reconciling Several Penitents

The September 2022 *Newsletter* examined the most commonly celebrated form of the Sacrament of Penance, the Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents, in light of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy's definition of the sacraments in no. 59. This paragraph describes the sacraments' sanctifying purpose, of which one aspect is ecclesial, namely, to *build up the body of Christ*. The paragraph also highlights how sacramental grace is given and fruitfully received: "They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity." These two elements – the ecclesial purpose and the fruitful reception of grace – also characterize another form of celebration in the *Order of Penance*, the Order for Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution. This form, which is celebrated almost entirely in common, adopts and expands the basic structure of the form for reconciling individual penitents in order to express more clearly the sacrament's ecclesial purpose and to dispose penitents more fully to the reception of sacramental grace.

A Communal Celebration

In the decree promulgating the *Order of Penance* in 1973, Jean Cardinal Villot, Vatican Secretary of State, notes that, in addition to the Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents, an Order for Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution has been prepared "to highlight the communal aspect of the Sacrament." According to the Introduction of the ritual book, "a common celebration more clearly manifests the ecclesial nature of Penance" (no. 22).

What is the ecclesial nature of this sacrament? According to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, "Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the 'sacrament of unity,' namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops. Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it" (no. 26). This paragraph, which diminishes neither the individual aspect of liturgical participation nor the singular role of ordained ministers in liturgical celebrations, highlights the role that each member of Christ's Body exercises in liturgy. The Order for Reconciling Several Penitents enacts and expresses this truth ritually. As a body, the Christian community listens to God's word, prays for one another, and praises God for his mercy (cf. *Order of Penance*, Introduction, no. 22). The prayer of the community strengthens the repentance of individuals, and, in a reciprocal way, the newly reconciled members enrich the Church. These common gestures express the social aspect of personal sin and reconciliation: "each individual's sin in some way affects others" and "every soul that rises above itself, raises up the world" (St. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 16). Even those who will receive the sacrament at another time may take part in the liturgy (cf. *Order of Penance*, Introduction, no. 22), since their prayer supports their brothers and sisters who will approach the Sacrament, and they themselves are strengthened as their companions are raised up.

The Basic Structure of Reconciling Individual Penitents Is Expanded

The Introduction of the *Order of Penance* treats the two Orders individually: Reconciling Individual Penitents at nos. 15-21 and Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution at nos. 22-30. These two sections include headings that display the basic structure of each Order. Similar headings are present in the Orders themselves, with major headings distinguished from minor headings by size, color, or style in the various editions of the book to be published in the dioceses of the United States.

The Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents consists of five main parts: the Reception of the Penitent; the optional Reading of the Word of God; the Confession of Sins and Acceptance of Satisfaction; the Prayer of the Penitent and Absolution; and the Proclamation of Praise of God and the Dismissal of the Penitent. The Introduction of the *Order of Penance* delineates another part which precedes the five listed above: the Preparation of the Priest and the Penitent (cf. no. 15). The Order for Reconciling Several Penitents consists of four main parts: the Introductory Rites; the Celebration of the Word of God; the Rite of Reconciliation; and the Concluding Rites. A number of subheadings are given beneath each of these main parts. In addition to the options provided in this latter Order, the many beautiful examples of Penitential Celebrations found in Appendix II of the *Order of Penance* – ordinarily used to foster the spirit and virtue of penance and prepare the faithful for a fuller celebration of the sacrament itself – may be adapted for use in a service for Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution.

The basic structure of each Order is presented here, in parallel columns for the sake of comparison:

<i>Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents</i>	<i>Order for Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution</i>
I. Reception of the Penitent	I. The Introductory Rites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liturgical Song • Greeting • Prayer
II. Reading of the Word of God (optional)	II. The Celebration of the Word of God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading(s) • Homily • Examination of Conscience
III. Confession of Sins and Acceptance of Satisfaction	III. The Rite of Reconciliation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Confession of Sins • Individual Confession and Absolution
IV. Prayer of the Penitent and Absolution	
V. Proclamation of Praise of God and Dismissal of the Penitent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proclamation of Praise for God’s Mercy • Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving
	IV. The Concluding Rites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessing and Dismissal

As this comparison makes clear, the basic structure of Reconciling Individual Penitents is present in the Order for Reconciling Several Penitents, albeit in an expanded and largely communal form. This amplification and its celebration in common not only manifest the ecclesial nature of the sacrament but also dispose those gathered to receive sacramental grace fruitfully.

The Introductory Rites are amplified through song, procession, an optional instruction, and prayer. These elements do not affect the valid conferral of sacramental grace, but they do dispose the assembly to repentance. The art of music – whether by making it or hearing it – engages the human heart in a deep way, inviting individuals to conversion. In this first part of the Order, song leads to prayer: the invitation by the priest, the silent prayer of the community, the spoken oration of the priest, and the community’s concluding “Amen.”

The Celebration of the Word of God, which is optional in the Order for Reconciling Individuals, normally takes place in the communal celebration “because through his word God calls people to penance and leads them to a true conversion of heart” (no. 24). When there is more than one reading, a psalm, song, or period of silence may be placed between them. Through these the faithful come to know the word of God more deeply and give heartfelt assent to it (cf. nos. 24, 51). Finally, there is usually a homily and a period of silence for an examination of conscience. The period for the examination may replace the homily (cf. no. 26).

The third major part, the Rite of Reconciliation, begins with the common recitation of a formula of general confession (an option immediately before the confession of sins in the Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents). This formula may be followed by a litany or song but is always concluded by the common recitation of the Our Father with a concluding prayer by the priest. In a certain sense, this sequence is an expanded Prayer of the Penitent, beginning with the formula of general confession, continuing in the litany or song, and culminating with the Our Father and prayer. Confession and absolution then take place individually, with the other elements for Reconciling Individual Penitents, including the penitent’s act of contrition, not used. After individual confessions, the Proclamation of Praise for God’s Mercy occurs in an expanded and common way, using a psalm, hymn, or litany, such as the Canticle of Mary or Psalm 136. The priest concludes this common prayer with an oration of thanksgiving. The fourth part, the Concluding Rites, are expanded with a blessing.

A Rare Canticle in the *Liturgy of the Hours*

Early in every new year, those who pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* encounter a canticle based on 1 Timothy 3:16. This canticle appears only three times in the liturgical year: at First Vespers of both Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord, and then again on August 6, at Vespers for the Feast of the Transfiguration. Each of the three occasions has its own unique antiphon. The antiphon and canticle for Epiphany in the current U.S. edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours* is below, with the new translation of the canticle as in *The Abbey Psalms and Canticles* to the right:

Ant. 3 The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.

Canticle See 1 Tim 3:16

The mystery and glory of Christ

R. Praise the Lord, all you nations.

Christ manifested in the flesh,
Christ justified in the Spirit.

R. Praise the Lord, all you nations.

Christ contemplated by the angels,
Christ proclaimed by the pagans.

R. Praise the Lord, all you nations.

Christ who is believed in the world,
Christ exalted in glory.

R. Praise the Lord, all you nations.

R. O praise the Lord, all you nations.

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit.

R. O praise the Lord, all you nations.

He was seen by angels,
proclaimed among the Gentiles.

R. O praise the Lord, all you nations.

He was believed in throughout the world,
taken up in glory.

R. O praise the Lord, all you nations.

Ant. The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.

The *Gloria Patri* is inserted after the final refrain, followed by the repetition of the antiphon. Presumably the refrain is treated in each of its repetitions as another strophe, although when the office is chanted or recited in common there might be a variety of ways to approach the text. Perhaps because of its unusual format, with a refrain nested inside the beginning and concluding antiphon, different editions of the *Liturgy of the Hours* in other languages and from other Conferences of Bishops have treated this canticle in a variety of ways, from an editorial perspective.

The refrain in the U.S. breviary mirrors the Latin of the four-volume typical edition (*Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes*). Interestingly, however, the Vatican's second edition of the *Ordo Cantus Officii* (2015) provides a different refrain in each of the canticle's three instances, namely, a segment of the canticle's antiphon. This variation is also reflected in the *Antiphonale Romanum*, vol. II (2009), published by the monks of Solesmes.

1 Tim 3:16 begins: "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion" (RSV). The brief canticle that takes up the rest of the verse concisely and beautifully points to the economy of our salvation. In a plan laid down from all eternity, our Savior became flesh and was manifested to us. We commemorate this manifestation in a special way in the celebrations of the Lord's Epiphany, Baptism, and Transfiguration. May the celebration of the *Liturgy of the Hours* continue to help the Church praise and honor her Lord, the King of kings.