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‘PURIFICATION OF MEMORY’

**THE RITUAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
OF SOCIAL SIN**

&

THE PENITENTIAL CELEBRATION

Submitted by Corran Tyrone Pike
B Theol. (UNDA)
B Bus. (ECU)

Supervisor
Dr. Clare Johnson

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of Master of Theology**

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CONTENTS

Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	vi
Declaration	vii
Tables and Pictures	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations	x
Introduction.....	1
(i) Methodology	3
(ii) Chapter Overview	6
(iii) Explanation of Terms	7
Chapter 1: The Sacrament of Penance.....	10
1.1 Scriptural Origins	10
1.2 Historical Development	14
1.3 The Second Vatican Council	19
1.4 The Australian Context	20
Chapter 2: Social Sin.....	27
2.1 Historical and Theological Underpinnings	27
2.2 Relating Personal Sin and Social Sin	31
2.3 Group Apologies for Social Sin	35
Chapter 3: Ritual Case-Studies.....	39
3.1 The Rite of Penance	39
3.1.1 Contrition	40
3.1.2 Confession	41
3.1.3 Act of Penance (Satisfaction)	41
3.1.4 Absolution	42
3.2 Case-Study 1: The 'Purification of Memory' Apology	43
3.2.1 Contrition	44
3.2.2 Confession	47
3.2.3 Act of Penance (Satisfaction)	51
3.2.4 Absolution	53
3.3 Case-Study 2: The Apology to the Stolen Generations	55
3.3.1 Contrition	56
3.3.2 Confession	59
3.3.3 Act of Penance (Satisfaction)	62
3.3.4 Absolution	64
3.4 Case-Study 3: Apology to Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse	68
3.4.1 Contrition	68
3.4.2 Confession	71
3.4.3 Act of Penance (Satisfaction)	73
3.4.4 Absolution	74
3.5 Summary	75

Chapter 4:	The Penitential Celebration.....	78
	4.1 Ritual Structure	79
	4.2 Ritual Analysis of Sample Penitential Celebrations	81
	4.2.1 Introductory Rites	81
	4.2.1.1 Opening Hymn	82
	4.2.1.2 Greeting/Explanation of Theme	83
	4.2.1.3 Opening Prayer	84
	4.2.2 Liturgy of the Word	85
	4.2.2.1 First Reading/Responsorial Psalm/ Second Reading	86
	4.2.2.2 Gospel/Homily	87
	4.2.3 Rites of Contrition and Repentance	88
	4.2.3.1 Examination of Conscience	88
	4.2.3.2 Act of Repentance	89
	4.2.3.3 Lord's Prayer/Embolism	93
	4.2.3.4 Act of Contrition	94
	4.2.3.5 Prayer of Thanksgiving	97
	4.2.3.6 Final Prayer	98
	4.2.4 Concluding Rites	98
	4.2.4.1 Blessing	98
	4.2.4.2 Dismissal	99
	4.2.4.3 Closing Hymn	100
	4.3 Summary	100
Chapter 5:	The Pastoral Use of the Penitential Celebration.....	102
	5.1 'Laboratories' for Development	102
	5.2 The Sin and Conversion Penitential Celebration	104
	5.2.1 Ritual Analysis of Sin and Conversion PC	105
	5.2.2 Summary	107
	5.3 The Service of Solidarity	109
	5.3.1 Ritual Analysis of Service of Solidarity	109
	5.3.2 Summary	114
	5.4 Proposed PC for Communities Harmed by Abuse	115
	5.4.1 Ritual Analysis of Proposed PC	117
	5.4.1.1 Introductory Rites	117
	5.4.1.2 Liturgy of the Word	119
	5.4.1.3 Rites of Repentance and Contrition	120
	5.4.1.4 Concluding Rites	126
	5.5 Summary	126
Chapter 6:	Theological Reflections	129
	6.1 Sacramental versus Non-Sacramental Rites	129
	6.2 Rituals of Forgiveness	134
	6.3 Mortal and Venial Sin	140
	6.4 Summary	142

Conclusion	143
Appendices	
I. Pope John Paul II: 'Purification of Memory' Liturgy	146
II. Prime Minister Rudd: Apology to the Stolen Generations	153
Bibliography	166

ABSTRACT

The Sacrament of Penance in the Australian Catholic Church is experiencing a pastoral decline. Concurrently, in the secular world, increasingly people are demanding and experiencing rituals of communal apology for social sin. Secular communal apologies (and rituals of forgiveness) appear to be speaking to people in a way that existing liturgical rituals in the church are not. There are no communal rituals for the acknowledgement of social sin currently included in the *Rite of Penance*. This is a lacuna in the church's ritual complex that needs to be addressed. This dissertation will analyse several recent communal apologies for social sin in order to discern how they appear to be meeting a discernible need among the community that is not being met by current practice of ecclesial penitential rituals, and in order that what is learned from them may enrich and inform the liturgical rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation in the Australian Catholic Church. In particular this dissertation will examine the Penitential Celebration outlined in the *Rite of Penance*, as a rite with great potential to address the current ritual void regarding appropriate acknowledgement of the problem of social sin in the Church.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

1. This dissertation is my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or any other institution.
2. To the best of my knowledge, this dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

Corran Tyrone Pike

Fremantle

Western Australia

December, 2008.

TABLES AND PICTURES

3.2.2	<i>Pope John Paul II Prays at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.....</i>	50
4.1	<i>Ritual Structure of Penitential Celebrations.....</i>	80
5.2	<i>Ritual Structure of the 'Sin and Conversion' PC.....</i>	105
5.3	<i>Ritual Structure of the 'Service of Solidarity' Liturgy.....</i>	110
5.4	<i>Ritual Structure of Proposed PC for Communities Harmed by Abuse.....</i>	118

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May all those who are adversely affected by social sin find the healing, forgiveness and reconciliation that they seek.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
ITC	<i>International Theological Commission</i>
PC	<i>Penitential Celebration</i>
R et P	<i>Reconciliatio et Paenitentia</i>
Rite 1	<i>The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents</i>
Rite 2	<i>The Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution</i>
Rite 3	<i>The Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution</i>
RP	<i>Rite of Penance</i>

“The omission of good is no less reprehensible than the commission of evil.”

PLUTARCH, “Contentment,” *Moralia* (circa 100 CE)

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965 CE) called for sweeping liturgical reforms in the life of the Catholic Church. In particular, the Council instigated reforms to the Sacrament of Penance in order to bring the celebration of this sacrament into the twentieth century and beyond. Now in the twenty-first century, over forty years since the close of this Council, the Sacrament of Penance in the life of the Australian Catholic Church is continuing to experience a pastoral decline. Reception of this sacrament in the Australian Catholic Church is dwindling, with empty confessionals a common sight in many parish Churches.¹ Concurrently in Australia there is a secular move toward the official recognition of social sin occurring via the performance of public corporate apologies that acknowledge the past wrongs of certain groups within society against other groups within society and ask for forgiveness for those social 'sins' of the past.

In a very real sense a gap has begun to emerge. Secular group apologies for social sin seem to be fostering reconciliation, and harnessing rituals in the promotion of forgiveness in ways that the Sacrament of Penance does not appear able. In more recent decades, group apologies have emerged as avenues whereby the particular hurts of a community, country or group of people are officially acknowledged, where sincere contrition is expressed for social sin, where sincere apologies for past hurts and injustices are expressed, where forgiveness is sought from the offended groups, and where the often delicate and painful process of community healing and reconciliation effectively has begun.² A number of scholars are now

¹ See Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today* "Reconciliatio et Paenitentia." (Homebush, N.S.W: St Pauls, 1985), para.28, 107. Pope John Paul II officially recognised in this document that the Sacrament of Penance is now a sacrament in 'crisis.'

² This will be illustrated in the ritual case-studies outlined in Chapter 3.

beginning to recognise the fruitful insights that group apologies for social sin can bring.³ Corporate and political apologies have at their core a desire to move forward by recognising the hurts and misdeeds of the past.⁴ Group apologies can be a valuable resource for the Church to study because they represent a bridge between the sacred and profane worlds. They often rely on the use of ritual in their expression. These secular rituals can provide insights that potentially could enliven and reinvigorate the celebration and reception of the rituals of reconciliation of the Australian Catholic Church.

This dissertation will analyse areas of potential in the liturgical acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin, both in the current complex of penitential rituals as they are celebrated in the liturgical life of the Australian Catholic Church, and as they may be celebrated more fruitfully in the future. Today the Church is challenged to acknowledge the contemporary pastoral need for such rituals and to provide new ways to meet this need via its official forms of liturgical expression. Ultimately, the Church is charged with the mandate to offer to all of humanity the opportunity to experience the forgiveness and reconciliation that Jesus Christ brings.⁵ In particular, this paper will argue that the non-sacramental Penitential Celebration (PC) as outlined in the *Rite of Penance* (RP) holds great potential to meet this need. The PC is a ritual for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin that has been largely underutilised in the Church's existing penitential practice.

³ See Marc Howard Ross, "Ritual and the Politics of Reconciliation" in *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Bar-Siman-Tov Yaacov, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 197-278.

⁴ Barkan and Karn suggest: "Although they do not erase or undo what has already happened, apologies can amend the past so that it resonates differently in the present for those who feel aggrieved by it or responsible for it." Elazar Barkan and Alexander Karn, "Group Apology as Ethical Imperative." in *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, ed. Elazar Barkan (California, USA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8.

⁵ Cf. Mark 16: 15: "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Gospel to all creation."

(i) Methodology

The Second Vatican Council affirmed the primacy of the liturgical worship of the Church.⁶ A classic question of liturgical theology asks: does the liturgical practice of the Church drive theological reflection, or should theology drive liturgical practice? In his book *On Liturgical Theology*, Aidan Kavanagh explains that it is the experience of the liturgical worship of the Church (*theologia prima*) that gives rise to theological reflection (*theologia secunda*).⁷ The broad idea underpinning the methodology of liturgical theology was originally formulated by the fifth century monk, Prosper of Aquitaine, who taught that the law of worship (*lex orandi*) established the law of belief (*lex credendi*).⁸ The methodology of liturgical theology regards the liturgical act of the gathered community (the Church) in worship as the dynamic and active source for theological reflection (*theologia prima*).⁹ Theological reflection on

⁶ The council stated: "The liturgy is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In it full public worship is performed by the mystical Body of Jesus Christ. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree." Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II – The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. The Vatican Collection. vol.1. rev. ed. (New York: Costello Publishing Co., 1988), "Sacrosanctum concilium", para.7, 4-5.

⁷ Kavanagh writes: "Worship conceived broadly is what gives rise to theological reflection, rather than the other way around. It is the law of worship which founds or establishes the law of belief – rather as a foundation establishes a house or as the virtue of justice founds the law." Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 3.

⁸ Irwin writes: "This phrase (sometimes rendered *ut legem credendi statuât lex supplicandi*), found in the so-called *Capitula Coelestini* (statements added to a letter of Pope Celestine I, dated in the early fifth century, also called the *Capitula* or *Auctoritates de gratia*), is now generally ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine's *Indiculus*, written between 435-442." Kevin W. Irwin, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi – Origins and Meaning: State of the Question." *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (Spring, 2002): 67.

See also Alister E. McGrath, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*. (U.S.A: Blackwell, 1993), 343.

⁹ The law of belief (*lex credendi*) can also shape the law of worship (*lex orandi*). On this point Kavanagh writes: "There is no doubt that the law of belief does indeed shape and influence the law of worship. But the maxim does not say this, nor does it need to. It says only that the latter constitutes or founds the former. To reverse this is to cancel out the meaning of the maxim in its original formulation. The law of belief does not constitute the law of worship." Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 92-93. Several critiques to the Kavanagh/Fagerberg school of liturgical theology have been offered. See Paul de Clerk, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The

the ritual event (*theologia secunda*) then serves to shape and inform future experiences of that ritual event.¹⁰

Reconciliation is a term which can be used to describe the restoration of broken relationships: between people, of humanity with the created order, of sub-groups with other sub-groups, with God and with the Church.¹¹ The sacramental liturgical celebration of Reconciliation may touch upon, embody and promote any or all of these.¹² In the history of the Church, liturgies of forgiveness have continually changed and been adapted. These changes often occur dynamically within the liturgical worship of the Church and are necessary in order to meld theological understanding (which is also continually evolving) with the liturgical experience of forgiveness within the worshipping community.¹³ This God-induced change occurs not only within the existing complex of sacramental rituals of Reconciliation in the Church, but also further afield in the wider secular world, as was recognised by the Second Vatican Council, which states:

Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage." *Studia Liturgica* 24, no.2 (1994): 178-200 and Paul V. Marshall, "Reconsidering Liturgical Theology: Is There a Lex Orandi for all Christians?" *Studia Liturgica* 25 (1995): 129-151.

¹⁰ Kavanagh comments: "I infer that the adjustment which the assembly undertakes in response to the God-induced change it suffers is a dynamic, critical, reflective, and sustained act of theology in the first instance, of *theologia prima*. And I maintain that our fall from this into *theologia secunda* has imperceptibly rendered us aphasic and inept in regard to it. For this reason, it is far easier for us to write and react to theologies of the liturgy than to perceive liturgical theology as it occurs and factor its results wisely for the life of the world." Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 77.

¹¹ Reconciliation with the Church includes reconciliation between Christians (whether communal or individual), ecumenical rapprochement, as well as reconciliation among Roman Catholics who are estranged either formally (through excommunication or interdict) or informally.

¹² See Pope John Paul II, R et P, para.7, 31. Pope John Paul II makes the important distinction between the sacramental *vertical dimension* of reconciliation (concerning the relationship between humankind and God) and the human *horizontal dimension* (the reality of division between people and the need for reconciliation between them).

¹³ For a detailed analysis see Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964).

The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by that faith it tries to discern in the events, the needs and the longings which it shares with other men of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or of the purpose of God.¹⁴

The Council also reaffirmed the importance of the Church engaging in a contemporary dialogue with the wider secular world when it stated that: "At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel if it is to carry out its task."¹⁵

According to Kavanagh, the methodology of liturgical theology is open to this important Church-world dialogue. This paper is concerned with evolving communal rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation for social sin as they are experienced in the contemporary world. Gleaning the important insights offered by rituals of reconciliation for social sin drawn from the wider secular world can allow the Church to adapt its current rituals to meet an expressed ritual-social need among its own members. Kavanagh describes this type of crucial interplay when he writes: "It is not possible to talk about Church without talking about world, since Church exists in the World. World frames Church, and cosmology is the foundation on which ecclesiology rests."¹⁶ This research will engage in this important dialogue with the contemporary world in order to discern the 'signs of the time'¹⁷ in rituals for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin.

¹⁴ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Gaudium et spes," para.11, 912.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para.4, 905.

¹⁶ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 23.

¹⁷ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Gaudium et spes," para.4, 905. The 'signs of the time' was a significant term used during the Second Vatican Council to describe the crucial interplay between Church and world in theological discourse.

This work is also mindful of the milieu in which the Sacrament of Penance is experienced pastorally in the unique context of Australia. Liturgical theology must be inherently pastoral in its focus. Kavanagh laments the sort of poor theological reflection which results from a lack of pastoral focus when he writes: “Our aphasic ineptitude with liturgical theology as *theologia prima* may also be why our pastoral theology is often so remote pastorally and so genially untheological, quite unlike the theology practiced by the early Church Fathers, a theology which was with few exceptions thoroughly pastoral.”¹⁸ Ideally it is in parish Churches where the People of God should find nourishment and edification, and ultimately experience forgiveness and reconciliation. This is the crucible in which the true pastoral qualities of liturgical ritual ultimately are measured.

(ii) Chapter Overview

This research paper will be comprised of 6 Chapters:

Chapter 1 will explore briefly the historical evolution of the Sacrament of Penance. It will address the scriptural origins of sin, the historical development of the Sacrament of Penance, the reforms of the Sacrament of Penance since the close of the Second Vatican Council, and the status quo regarding the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Penance in the Australian pastoral context.

Chapter 2 will address the contemporary concept of social sin. It will illustrate the theological and historical underpinnings of social sin; illustrate the interplay between social sin and personal sin, and identify the contemporary phenomenon of group apologies for social sin in both the secular and ecclesial contexts.

¹⁸ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 77.

Chapter 3 will analyse the use of ritual in group apologies for social sin as theological sources which have the potential to inform the ritual acknowledgement of social sin in the future penitential practices of the Catholic Church. It will outline the Rite of Penance and provide three ritual case-studies of group apologies for social sin.

Chapter 4 will analyse the ritual structure of the PC and provide a detailed ritual analysis of the sample PC's as outlined in Appendix II of the RP.

Chapter 5 will demonstrate the potential of the PC as a ritual for the acknowledgement of social sin. In particular it will illustrate the PC for Sin and Conversion as a liturgical model which could be adapted pastorally for the liturgical recognition of social sin. This chapter will then draw insights from a contemporary liturgy for the recognition of social sin (the Service of Solidarity) and illustrate how the various ritual elements of the PC could be adapted pastorally in a proposed liturgy of healing and reconciliation for the social sin of clergy sexual abuse.

Chapter 6 will address some of the theological issues related to the use of PC's for the liturgical recognition of social sin and will explore avenues for their future development. In particular, this chapter will address some of the theological tensions surrounding the use of sacramental versus non-sacramental rites and will analyse the PC as a ritual of forgiveness, highlighting some of the problems in the nomenclature of sin in the existing theology of the Church.

(iii) Explanation of Terms

It is necessary from the outset to lay some important ground-rules regarding the terminology that will be used in this study, for the sake of consistency and to avoid unnecessary confusion. Wherever possible, this paper will

endeavour to include gender inclusive translations. However, there are times when translations do not utilise gender inclusive language (as is often the case with many Church documents). The *Rite of Penance* uses the terms 'Penitential Celebration' and 'Penitential Service' interchangeably when referring to this particular non-sacramental liturgy. For consistency this study will use the term Penitential Celebration (PC) where relevant.

The term *social sin* points to a contemporary understanding of the effects of the accumulation of many personal sins of a similar nature, committed many times over, by those who belong to the same organisational structure, be it the Church, a corporate structure, a bureaucracy, a segment of a country's population or indeed a country itself. The focus here is more on the accumulated effect of individual sin to such a large degree that it is experienced socially (hence *social sin*), something in which all may participate, experience and be adversely affected. These may be sins of commission or, perhaps more frequently, sins of omission. When the damaging effects of social sin accumulate over time in economic, political and even ecclesiastical structures, this gives rise to the related terms *structural* and *systemic sin*. One of the examples of structural social sin that features prominently in this work is the blight of clergy sexual abuse in Australia. The liturgical recognition of social sin demands a far different ritual approach from those historically directed at either personal sin or the effects of personal sin on the community.

The terms *reconciliation* and *confession* are often used interchangeably when referring to the ritual expression of sacramental forgiveness. This can be problematic when reference is made to secular terms, such as Aboriginal reconciliation, confession of guilt and 'performing one's penance', which all utilise the same terminology but in a non-sacramental context. Accordingly, this treatise will capitalise the word Penance when referring to the

sacramental ritual itself (i.e. the Sacrament of *Penance*) and it will capitalise the term Reconciliation when outlining the three different rites within the sacramental ritual (i.e. Rites 1, 2 and 3 of *Reconciliation*). In all other instances where these terms refer to non-sacramental expressions, the lower case will be used: Aboriginal reconciliation, confession of guilt and performing one's penance, etc. In dealing with specific examples of liturgical rites for social sin in this document, the word *victim* will be substituted with the word *survivor*. *Survivor* is a term that is far more positive in its outlook and indicates that a person is living with a particular reality that does not overwhelm them.

CHAPTER 1

The Sacrament of Penance

The penitential practices of the Catholic Church have never made provision for the ritual recognition or amelioration of social sin, either social sin committed by the Church community, within the Church community or toward the Church community. There is however a strong scriptural basis for understanding the damaging effects of individual sin on the rest of the community and evidence for discerning a tradition of ritual repentance for the corporate sins of the community in the penitential practices of the early Christian Church.

1.1 Scriptural Origins

The origins of the theological concept of sin are ancient. The Old Testament uses several Hebrew words for sin: *hata*,¹⁹ *awon*²⁰ and *pesa*.²¹ Hater comments: "Each description implies that sin makes it difficult to become a whole person because it sets up a barrier to personal/community happiness."²² The Old Testament reveals an understanding of sin that has both individual and communal dimensions. We see both of these dimensions at work in the second creation narrative of the Book of Genesis.²³ Here the effects of

¹⁹ 'Hata' is translated as "missing the mark." Robin C. Cover, "Sin, Sinners (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol.6. David N. Freedman, ed. (Sydney: Double Day, 1992), 32.

²⁰ Ibid., 'Awon' is translated as "moral guilt before God."

²¹ Ibid., 'Pesa' is translated as "religious rebellion."

²² Robert J. Hater, "Sin and Reconciliation: Changing Attitudes in the Catholic Church." *Worship* 59 (January, 1985): 22.

²³ Cf. Genesis 2:4b - 3:24. This creation narrative is the 'Yahwistic' account of the fall.

individual sin sever relationships and the cumulative effects of original sin²⁴ are passed on to humankind.²⁵

The Old Testament contains examples of rituals of forgiveness for the effects of individual sin on the community,²⁶ such as the ritual of the scape-goat which was intended to expiate the sins of the whole community by symbolically transferring them to the scape-goat which was then let loose into the wilderness.²⁷ Perhaps the most striking Old Testament example of a ritual of cleansing for the impact of the sins of the individual on the community is that which occurs as part of the Day of Atonement.²⁸ In this yearly ritual the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies²⁹ in the Temple of Jerusalem to sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal in expiation for the sins of the people.

While sin is seen in its communal dimension in these rituals, this is only to the degree that the sin of the individual has an effect on the community. These rituals cannot be regarded as rituals of forgiveness for social sin as such.³⁰ However, the Day of Atonement ritual does provide many useful

²⁴ Original sin is a theological concept developed firstly by St Paul in Romans 5 and further enunciated by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE).

²⁵ Hater explains: "From the beginning, people sinned, and sin brought evil and alienation into society. This sinful situation is collective and becomes intensified through personal sin." Hater, "Sin and Reconciliation", 21.

²⁶ In the Book of Leviticus we see a ritual of cleansing for the effects of individual sin on the community described in these terms: "Once the sin of which it is guilty has been discovered, the community must offer a young bull. The elders of the community will then lay their hands on the bull's head before Yahweh and the bull will be slaughtered before Yahweh." Leviticus 4: 14-15.

²⁷ Cf. Leviticus 16:22.

²⁸ Cf. Exodus 30:10. Also known as the 'Day of Expiation.'

²⁹ The most sacred place in the Jerusalem Temple where the 'Ark of the Covenant', the vessel containing the 'Decalogue' (10 Commandments) was kept.

³⁰ After analysing the Day of Atonement and Scapegoat rituals, Carmichael concludes: "The exercise can only be truly meaningful if it communicates to each individual Israelite that he should remember the special character of each of his specific offenses." Calum Carmichael, "The Origin of the Scape-Goat Ritual." *Vetus Testamentum* L:2 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000): 172.

insights for understanding how the liturgical celebration of a ritual of forgiveness for social sin could occur.³¹ The Old Testament details Jewish conceptions of the need for corporate repentance for the failure of the people to keep their covenant promises, but this understanding of corporate guilt and the consequent need for corporate rituals of repentance does not seem to have been transferred into the nascent penitential practices of the early Church.

The New Testament also reveals an understanding of both the individual and communal effects of sin. The word used for sin in the New Testament is *'hamartia'*, the Greek translation from the Hebrew.³² The New Testament teaches about the forgiveness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, who dies once and for all for the sins of all people and fulfils and completes the rituals of repentance found in the Old Testament. The Letter to the Hebrews expresses this salvation in rich soteriological language: "But now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal redemption."³³

³¹ Peter Fink sees in the Jewish Day of Atonement ritual a potential model for the Christian ritual recognition of social sin. Fink writes: "As a way to address directly the growing consciousness of social sin, is a suggestion to establish a Christian Day of Atonement... What is envisioned is a day of fast and repentance on which the Christian community will offer its prayer for God's forgiveness and healing of sins that are elusive to personal grasp. Included in this are the sins of the community itself, the sins of the Church, and the sins of the world." Peter E. Fink, "Alternative 3: Liturgy for a Christian Day of Atonement." in Fink, Peter E, ed., *Reconciliation. Alternative Futures for Worship*. vol. 4. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 131.

Joel S. Kaminsky, "The Sins of the Fathers: A Theological Investigation of the Biblical Tension Between Corporate and Individualised Retribution." *Judaism* 46, issue 3 (Summer, 1997): 319-332. Kaminsky also recognises the fruitful insights that rituals like the Day of Atonement can bring in moving away from a personal towards a more social and communally oriented understanding of the effects of sin.

³² See *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 40-41.

³³ Hebrews 9: 11-12.

The authority of the Church to forgive sins in Christ's name and with his divine authority is drawn from the New Testament. The Matthean text reads: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."³⁴ In earlier writings, St Paul illustrates an already developing understanding of the ecclesial effects of sin: "If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain."³⁵ This text, in which Paul compares the human body with the body of the Church, highlights the deleterious communal effects of personal sin. Matthews writes: "The body is united in the love and life of Christ. But sin is non-love; it is a denial of the life of Christ. Insofar as the sinner refuses the love of Christ, the whole body lacks that measure of love it should have. My sin hurts other people."³⁶

Understandings of the effect of the behaviour of the individual on the gathered worshipping community are very strong in the early Matthean community. This is exemplified in the following passage: "Whatever the misdemeanour, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain the charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community. And if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a gentile or a tax collector."³⁷ Karl Rahner suggests that it was this model of reconciliation, one that was profoundly linked to the Church community gathered in worship, which formed the Scriptural basis for the early development of the Sacrament of Penance.³⁸

³⁴ Matthew 16:19. The later Johannine text reads: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." Cf. John 20:23.

³⁵ Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:26.

³⁶ Edward Matthews, *The Forgiveness of Sins*. (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1978), 47.

³⁷ Matthew 18: 16-17.

³⁸ Rahner writes: "Matthew 18 shows very clearly that it is matter of the power to impose or to lift a ban with regard to a brother who, by his behaviour, radically and obstinately

The Scriptural understanding of sin in the New Testament is certainly seen in communal terms, but the focus is mostly on recognising the sinful actions of the individual and how they can be harmful to the community.

Furthermore, the community has an important role to play in bringing the individual sinner back into the worshipping community, which in the New Testament model is the body of the Church. A rediscovery of the importance of the worshipping community (the Church) as an integral part of the process of forgiveness and reconciliation is an important aspect of the ritual acknowledgement of social sin.³⁹

1.2 Historical Development

The earliest evidence for penitential rituals of forgiveness within the Christian community focuses on the commission and consequences of individual sins which placed the sinner out of right relationship with the rest of the worshipping community and with God. The role of the community in this situation was to help and support the sinner in and through their process of repentance and re-conversion so that eventually they may recognise their sin, turn away from their sinfulness, repent, ask for forgiveness, and rejoin the community having been forgiven and having healed the breach in relationship caused by their sinful behaviour.

The penitential practices of the early Church in the second and third centuries differed widely according to the custom of the local Church, but

opposes the nature of Jesus' community or who, conversely, wishes to be reconciled with it again. It is the authority to impose an exclusion which has real meaning before God and which places the guilty person outside the community of salvation that is the Church." Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.15 "Penance in the Early Church." (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 7.

³⁹ Crosby remarks: "We need rituals flowing from the Church in its local, familial setting. There, with this communal reconciliation, they will know they are forgiven in the words of the one who said: 'I am there among them' when such communal reconciliation takes place." Michael H. Crosby, "Another Sacrament of Reconciliation: Forgiveness in the Church." *The Living Pulpit* 9, no.4 (October-December, 2000): 16.

always centred on the person of the bishop, the one entrusted with the authority to “bind and loose.”⁴⁰ An insight into second century Roman penitential practice is revealed in the writings of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (circa 175 CE). *Hermas* reveals the belief that sins committed after baptism could be forgiven, however this forgiveness was given once only.⁴¹ Three sins in particular were identified as harming the grace received in baptism and needing forgiveness: adultery, murder and apostasy.⁴² A sinner who lapsed back into sin after receiving this once only post-baptismal forgiveness was excommunicated from the Church.⁴³ As a consequence of this teaching, baptism in the early Church was sometimes deferred until late in one’s life (and in some instances was even postponed until close to death) for fear of sinning again.⁴⁴ Once again, the theological focus here is not on social sin as such, but on the individual sinner and the developing rites associated with bringing the repentant sinner back into the worshipping community. Joseph Favazza comments: “Though *Hermas* does not witness to a reconciliation rite, there appears to be recognition of the possibility of a sinner’s readmission into the community after adequate penitential works.”⁴⁵

The *Didascalia Apostolorum* (circa 230 CE) provides evidence of the early penitential practice of the eastern Syrian Church.⁴⁶ This document lists a broader set of sins warranting excommunication than were outlined by the earlier *Hermas* text. *Didascalia* includes: murder, usury, idolatry and theft.⁴⁷ Those found guilty of committing such sins were excommunicated from the

⁴⁰ Cf. Matthew 16:19.

⁴¹ See Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.15: 8, 65, 79.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 67-69.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁴ The Roman Emperor Constantine is believed to have been baptised and received into the Church on his death bed.

⁴⁵ Joseph A. Favazza, *The Order of Penitents: Historical Roots and Pastoral Future*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁷ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.15, 228.

worshipping community and were required to perform harsh public penances before they could be readmitted into the Eucharistic community.⁴⁸ *Didascalia* reveals a development of penitential practices in the early Church, but here also, the early Church's understanding of sin was not focussed on the sin of the community as a whole, but rather on the separation of the individual sinner from the worshipping community.

A more developed procedure for reconciling repentant sinners with the wider Church community began to emerge during the fourth to sixth centuries. The 'canonical penance' model emphasised the public performance of penance and admitted the repentant sinner back into the Church only after they could show that this often harsh penance had been carried out. It was a model that served to reinforce the role of the worshipping community in bringing the repentant sinner back into the fold. James Dallen writes: "Through ministry to the penitents and in sharing the penitents' path to table, the whole community was renewed in the commitment to be a penitent, reconciling community."⁴⁹ Once again, any notion of social sin, over and above the sins of its individual members, is not clearly present in this model of penance.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Rahner summarises the typical third century penitential practice: "The Church establishes that a person is a sinner and that he has, therefore, placed himself in opposition to the Church. Thus he is at least excluded from the Eucharist. If he confesses his sins privately before a bishop – which may be simply a way of inquiring whether his sins are really mortal sins and, therefore, have to be submitted to the penance of the Church – and if he is truly sorry, then he is admitted to Church penance proper. This access is already a sign of the Church's favour, but it is not yet reconciliation with the Church. The penitent is singled out by his dress, by his particular place in the celebration of the liturgy and by penitential obligations, such as fasting, etc. After some time he is reconciled with the Church by an imposition of hands on the part of the bishop (and of the clergy), accompanied by prayer." *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ James Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance." *Worship* 64, no.5 (September, 1990): 391.

⁵⁰ This is not to underestimate the extent to which sin was seen as communal and not simply individual. At the very least, there is evidence that in some Churches individual sinners joined an order of penitents, thus giving communal witness to their sinfulness. For a more

The seventh century saw the evolution of a distinctly different model of penance as Irish monks began to spread into mainland Europe. In the 'tariffed' model of penance, the bishop as the ordinary minister of penance was replaced by the priest, who imposed much leaner private penances on the penitent in keeping with a set of prescribed penalties written down in a set of books called the '*Libri Paenitentiales*'. Charles Curran explains that the name of tariffed penance was used because in these books were set down, in a casuistic manner, the satisfaction which should be required for particular sins.⁵¹

Unlike earlier models in which penance could only normally be received once, this model provided for penance to be received more often. This model soon became popular amongst the worshipping community because it allowed for absolution before a much more lenient penance was carried out in an environment that was both private and personal. The advent of the tariffed model of penance meant that the Eucharist as the central locale of forgiveness and communal support of the sinner was replaced with a separate and far more individualistic private penitential process.⁵² This individual and private model of penance diminished the central role of the Eucharistic celebration as the locus of a penitential practice that was communally oriented.⁵³

The next significant phase in the evolution of the Sacrament came at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215 CE)

detailed analysis see Joseph G. Schaller, "The Order of Penitents: Theological and Pastoral Directions." *Worship* 64 (May, 1990): 207-224.

⁵¹ See Charles E. Curran, "The Sacrament of Penance Today I." *Worship* 43, no.9 (1969): 513.

⁵² Dallen comments: "Repentant sinners were no longer ministered to uniquely by a community gathered for worship. They no longer experienced the goal of conversion and the symbol of reconciliation in the community gathered for worship." Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," 392.

⁵³ See Nathan Mitchell, "The Many Ways to Reconciliation: An Historical Synopsis of Christian Penance." in Mitchell, Nathan, ed., *Background and Directions: The Rite of Penance Commentaries*. (Washington: The Liturgical Conference, 1978), 35.

stated: "After receiving baptism, anyone who shall have lapsed into sin can always be restored through true penance."⁵⁴ This Council affirmed the necessity of individual auricular confession⁵⁵ and absolution by a priest, and obliged all Catholics who had reached the age of discretion to confess all of their known sins at least once a year at Easter.⁵⁶ Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (written in the twelfth century) were instrumental in the Church's recognition of penance as one of the seven official sacraments.⁵⁷

The Second Council of Lyons (1274 CE) officially recognised Penance as one of the seven sacraments of the Church.⁵⁸ The Council of Trent (1545-1563 CE) canonised the individual mode of penance, focussing on the sacramental power of the priest to absolve sins, and on the confession of personal sins in number and kind by the penitent.⁵⁹ This understanding highlighted the role of the priest to forgive or retain sins as a judge.⁶⁰ Trent's concern was on the necessity of integral confession whereby the penitent confessed to the priest all serious sins of which they were aware through an examination of conscience.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Josef Neuner & Jacques Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 6th ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), para.21, 17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para.1608, 621. Any confession mentioned to a priest in this context is required to be "auricular" (i.e. literally 'in the ear').

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Martos explains: "Because of the book's popularity and wide usage, Lombard's enumeration of the Catholic sacraments soon became accepted by theologians and preacher's alike, and by the end of the next century it was accepted by regional and ecumenical (that is, universal church) councils." Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church*. rev. ed. (Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 2001), 50.

⁵⁸ See Neuner & Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, para.28, 20.

⁵⁹ See *Ibid.*, para.1615-1634, 625-634; para.1627-1628, 631-632.

⁶⁰ Curran writes: "The individual priest becomes the judge of the penance to be given the penitent, thus emphasising a role of the minister of the sacrament as judge." Curran, "The Sacrament of Penance Today I," 513.

⁶¹ See James Dallen, "Twentieth Century Reform of Penance." *National Bulletin on Liturgy* 29, no.145 (Summer, 1996): 92. The obligation was for all Catholics who had reached the age of reason to confess all known sins in number and kind.

This brief sketch of the historical evolution of the Sacrament of Penance has demonstrated that in the Church's ritual practice, there has never been a true liturgical acknowledgement and sacramental expression of forgiveness for the damaging effects of social sin.⁶²

1.3 The Second Vatican Council

The most recent phase in the historical evolution of the Sacrament of Penance was ushered in with the advent of The Second Vatican Council. This Council called for a reform of the Sacrament of Penance that would "clearly express both the nature and effect of the sacrament."⁶³ Dallen believes that the council explicitly intended to focus on the role of the worshipping Church community in the revisions made to the Sacrament of Penance.⁶⁴ The new *Ordo Paenitentiae* was promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on December 2, 1973. The approved vernacular version of the *Ordo Paenitentiae*, the *Rite of Penance* (RP), was first published for pastoral use in Australia in September, 1975.⁶⁵

The RP includes three rites of sacramental Reconciliation: The Rite for Reconciliation of Individual Penitents (Rite 1);⁶⁶ the Rite for Reconciliation of

⁶² See Anscar J. Chupungco, ed. *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*. vol. 4. Sacraments and Sacramentals. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 95-103. The reconciliation ritual of the early Roman Church, as depicted in *The Old Gelasian Sacramentary*, certainly manifests the solidarity of humans in social evil. This is signified by the deacon pleading on behalf of the penitents as a group before the assembly of the faithful, the placement of the penitents in the body of the church, and their grasping of each other's hands and movement as a group at the deacon's command.

⁶³ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Sacrosanctum concilium", para.72, 22.

⁶⁴ Dallen comments: "In 1963, in the Constitution on the Liturgy, the bishops of Vatican Council II called for a reform that would clearly show the social and ecclesial nature and effects of the Sacrament." Dallen, "Twentieth Century Reform of Penance," 83.

⁶⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance, Rite of Baptised Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church*. (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1975).

⁶⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance* para.15-21, 10-11. Rite 1 is largely the same individual confession model that had already been extant since the Council of Trent, albeit with some slight pastoral modifications. The rite now includes much more emphasis on reading the

Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (Rite 2);⁶⁷ and the Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution (Rite 3).⁶⁸ The deliberate use of the term 'Reconciliation' in these sacramental rites focuses more on the conversion of the penitent than on the confession of personal wrongs.⁶⁹

1.4 The Australian Context

The 3 Rites of Reconciliation have been in pastoral use in Australia for over thirty years. Trying to ascertain the status quo on levels of reception of these rites in the Australian pastoral milieu is difficult because of a lack of meaningful statistical information upon which to draw.⁷⁰ One can only rely

Word of God. The penitent also has the choice of confession behind a veil or in the open. Cf. *The Code of Canon Law*, #964 (2), 219-220. This rite consists of a number of liturgical ritual elements that occur between penitent and priest, usually in the privacy of the confessional: Reception, Reading of the Word of God, Confession of Sins, Acceptance of Satisfaction (Penance), Prayer of the Penitent (Contrition) and Absolution, Proclamation of Praise of God and Dismissal.

⁶⁷ Ibid., para.22-30, 12-13. Rite 2 typically involves Introductory Rites, Opening Prayer, Celebration of the Word of God, Homily, Examination of Conscience, General Confession of Sins, Individual Confession and Absolution, Proclamation of Praise, Concluding Prayer and Concluding Rite. Thus Rite 2 differs somewhat from Rite 1 in that, although sacramental absolution still occurs in the one to one encounter between penitent and priest, the liturgical celebration involves the gathered worshipping community to a far greater degree.

⁶⁸ Ibid., para.31-35, 14-15. Rite 3 includes many of the same ritual elements as Rite 2, albeit with some slight modifications: Instruction, General Confession and General Absolution. Rite 3 also contains a shorter rite, including the short form of sacramental absolution if danger of death is imminent. Rite 3 differs in character from Rite 2 in that the focus is now away from individual absolution to general absolution within the context of a community celebration, indeed toward the Reconciliation of the whole worshipping community itself.

⁶⁹ Petrosino observes: "It is already by freely deciding to confess, and so even before actually confessing, that the believer begins to experience a reconciliation already underway. It is as if he suddenly received, by way of anticipation, the gift of being reconciled, so that he might then become reconciled with greater seriousness and truth." Silvano Petrosino, "The Confession of the Father and the Reconciliation of the Son." *Communio* xxxi, no.4 (Winter, 2004): 546.

⁷⁰ *The National Church Life Survey* is a periodic ecumenical survey of Australian Churches. Unfortunately this survey does not register information on the reception of specifically 'Catholic' sacraments. The so-called 'Pastoral Data Project' is the office responsible for the collation of all sacramental data in the Perth Archdiocese. Pastoral records held in the Archdiocese of Perth register information on the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage, but they do not record specific details regarding the reception

on anecdotal evidence to attempt to glean reliable information (if only second hand) on the pastoral use of the 3 Rites of Reconciliation in the Australian context. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the reception of Rite 1 is dwindling right across Australia. As one retired priest comments: "I am retired and supplied in 30 parishes in the last 18 months. I've heard only seven 'First Rite' confessions in that time of penitents all over 60 years of age. Most parishes have no one for confession. Rite 1 is non-existent in most parishes."⁷¹ Fr Ken Keating, parish priest of Our Lady of Grace, North Beach (Archdiocese of Perth) writes in *'The Swag'* on the use of the First Rite in his own parish: "Anecdotal evidence from the mid 1990s suggests that participation rates in Reconciliation were between 8% and 15% of parishioners."⁷² Most average parishes in Australia would fall (arguably) somewhere within this percentile range. It seems that empty confessionals are now a common sight in parishes throughout Australia.

When the anecdotal evidence relating to the reception of Rites 2 and 3 in Australia is considered, a different picture begins to emerge. Rite 2 is used consistently in parishes throughout Australia. These Rite 2 celebrations normally occur twice in the course of the liturgical year: once in Lent in preparation for Easter and once in Advent in preparation for Christmas. In the Archdiocese of Perth, some larger parishes (such as Bateman and Willetton) attract penitents in their thousands and sometimes as many as 20-30 priests are needed to hear the confessions of penitents. In the North Beach

of the Sacrament of Penance. This would tend to reinforce the prevailing view, to be outlined in Chapter 2, that the Sacrament of Penance is still seen as a personal rather than a communal sacrament. The gathering of this sort of valuable statistical information is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, given the limitations of protecting anonymity, there is a pressing need for the Archdiocese of Perth (and other dioceses in Australia that find themselves in a similar situation) to install proper procedures to record statistical data on the reception of the Sacrament of Penance where appropriate.

⁷¹ John Jegorow, ed., "The SWAG," *National Council of Priests of Australia Newsletter* 15, no.1 (Autumn, 2007): 16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 13, no.3 (Spring, 2005): 16.

parish, Fr Ken Keating reports that participation rates for Rite 2 are somewhere in the order of 80%-90% of the total number of parishioners.⁷³ This represents a marked increase in participation rates for Rite 2 and would probably represent the upper end of the average figures for most Australian parishes.

In Australia, most of the debates on the reception of Sacrament of Penance since the close of the Second Vatican Council have centred on the pastoral use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation.⁷⁴ Anecdotal evidence suggests that when it has been used, Rite 3 has succeeded in tapping into the worshipping community's desire for meaningful communal celebrations of Reconciliation.⁷⁵ While occurring in a communal context and incorporating a general absolution, the Third Rite is still focussed on individual sin and does not as yet allow for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin. The licit use of Rite 3 with general absolution in Australia was severely restricted in December 1998, as a result of the Oceanic Synod of Bishops meeting in Rome and the promulgation of a document called '*The Statement of Conclusions*'.⁷⁶ This document states: "Unfortunately, communal celebrations have not infrequently occasioned an illegitimate use of general absolution. This illegitimate use, like other abuses in the administration of the Sacrament

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ For a more detailed analysis of this debate see Brian Limbourn's Doctoral Dissertation, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation and General Absolution*. (Ottawa, Canada: St Paul University, 2002).

⁷⁵ Gleeson, a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney, recounts an incident where Rite 3 was used to great effect in a large parish in Western Sydney: "There were well over 500 people present, and not all the priests who had promised assistance were able to attend. In the course of an hour long liturgy, general absolution was given, and the five or six priests present then distributed themselves throughout the Church in order to be available for those people who wished to speak to a priest individually. Perhaps 40 or 50 people remained after the liturgy, and some of the conversations I had with those who approached me that night were among the most significant occasions of personal reflection I have experienced." Gerald Gleeson, "The Future of the 'Third Rite' of Reconciliation." *The Australasian Catholic Record* 77, no.1 (January, 2000): 30-31.

⁷⁶ Roman Curia and Australian Catholic Bishops. *The Statement of Conclusions*, http://www.vatican.va/cgi-bin/w3-msql/news_services/bulletin/news/4163. (14/12/1998). (accessed April, 2008).

of Penance, is to be eliminated."⁷⁷ The restrictions concerning the licit use of Rite 3 are now echoed in the pastoral document *Guidelines for use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation*, promulgated for use in the Archdiocese of Perth.⁷⁸

Anecdotal evidence in the Australian context suggests that at the same time as there has been a steady decline in the reception of the individual and private First Rite of Reconciliation, there has been an increase in the reception of Rites 2 and 3, which are more communal in their liturgical expression and celebration. The Australian worshipping community seems to be speaking with its feet in terms of a preference for rituals of Reconciliation that are celebrated communally.⁷⁹ In the Australian context,

⁷⁷ Ibid., para.45. Many priests (and bishops) reacted with disappointment when the 'Statement of Conclusions' restricted the licit pastoral use of Rite 3 in the Australian context. Archbishop of Brisbane John Bathersby commented, soon after 'The Statement of Conclusions' was handed down: "After looking at the document you say yes, terrible disappointment there. But ultimately as you, I even know, I prayed. I prayed about the document and because I did carry hurt and pain, and then said no, well this is coming from the leader of the Church. I have to take it seriously." Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Four Corners (ABC) "The Vatican's Verdict." Andrew Fowler (Reporter). 8/3/99.

<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/s20286.htm>. (accessed April, 2008).

Another 'Pastor Ignotus' (A pseudonym used as this priest did not wish to be publicly identified as opposing the official Church position) from an eastern states diocese commented: "Our diocese had used the Third Rite for 25 years until excessive and cruel pressure on the bishop, from Rome, forced its closure. It was used in almost every parish of the diocese in Advent and Lent. The numbers attending were always beyond expectations. The atmosphere was always one of joy. No other liturgy was so enthusiastically entered into." (John Jegorow, ed., "The SWAG," *National Council of Priests of Australia Newsletter* 15, no.1 (Autumn, 2007): 17.

This sense of loss amongst the Australian clergy illustrates that many still feel that the Church has somehow 'missed the boat' in this instance and has squandered a wonderful opportunity to revive the Sacrament of Penance in the life of the Australian Church, through the licit use of communal celebrations of Reconciliation and in particular the licit use of Rite 3.

⁷⁸ Archbishop Barry J. Hickey, *Guidelines for use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation (General Absolution)*. (Archdiocese of Perth, 1991).

⁷⁹ CNS Documentary Service, *Origins* 19, no.38 (February 22, 1990): 613-624. In the United States, a study entitled 'Reflections on the Sacrament of Penance in Catholic Life Today: A Study Document' was conducted in 1989. This study was undertaken by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Research and Practices Committee. The study included responses from 42% of US Bishops, 44% of a random sample of 2,500 priests and 35% of active Church attending laity in 3 U.S. dioceses. Although the study was initially confidential, it was made public in January 1990. The results of this study resonate with the available anecdotal

the liturgical reforms to the Sacrament of Penance have not resulted in the renewal for which the Council Fathers might have hoped. Michael Putney comments:

The new *Ordo Paenitentiae* was first published in December 1973, but Pope John Paul II could still say that it was the conviction of the bishops gathered in Rome ten years later for the synod on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church that the Sacrament of Penance is in crisis.⁸⁰

This growing sense of crisis was also recognised by the synod of Australasian Bishops held in Rome 1998.⁸¹ This sense of crisis is reflected in the *Statement of Conclusions* which reads: "Many Bishops in Australia have noted a decline in the sense of sin, having grave repercussions for the Sacrament of Penance."⁸² The synod of Australasian Bishops in 1998 resulted in the Post-Synodal document *Ecclesia in Oceania*.⁸³ This document also recognises a growing sense of crisis surrounding the reception of the Sacrament of Penance in the liturgical life of the Australian Catholic Church when it discerns that: "In other local Churches there are serious pastoral challenges with regard to this sacrament. Especially in developed societies,

evidence in the Australian context. The study found: 1) The frequency and reception of the Sacrament of Penance had declined significantly in the U.S. over the course of the last 25 years. 2) With regard to the reception of each of the Three Rites of Reconciliation, the study revealed that the frequency of reception of Rite1 had declined in use. 3) The reception of Rite 2 had increased to about 25% of parishes now using this rite on a more frequent basis. 4) It also found that Rite 3 although used sparingly, was pastorally successful. 5) In suggesting ways to revitalise the sacrament, bishops listed the more regular celebration of Rite 2 and a thorough reassessment of Rite 3 as possible approaches.

⁸⁰ Michael Putney, "The Sacrament of Penance in Crisis." *The Australasian Catholic Record* 67, no.1 (January, 1990): 19. Putney is now the bishop of the diocese of Townsville in Queensland.

⁸¹ Other than pastoral intuition/anecdotal evidence, it could be asked how the Australasian Bishops arrived at this conclusion. There may be alternative explanations for the apparent rejection by the faithful of the post Vatican II liturgical schemata for the Sacrament of Penance (especially Rite 1).

⁸² *The Statement of Conclusions*, para.44.

⁸³ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania: The Church in Oceania*. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2001).

many of the faithful are confused or indifferent about the reality of sin and the need for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance.”⁸⁴ The reforms to the Sacrament of Penance undertaken by the Second Vatican Council were badly needed, but these reforms in themselves have not resulted in an increase in the reception of this sacrament.⁸⁵ Rites 2 and 3 are celebrated communally, but their primary ritual action is still individual confession and absolution.⁸⁶ Reforms to the Sacrament of Penance did not include a ritual for the forgiveness of social sin. Tom Elich explains:

When we come to look at the Sacrament of Penance and our Rites of Reconciliation, what becomes blindingly clear is that they address only personal sin. The communal nature of the Second and Third Rites setting can make us aware of the social consequences of personal sin. The Rites may even address our personal involvement in social sin, but none of them addresses social sin as such. The Church has no ritual means to seek corporate reconciliation and forgiveness.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., para.41, 100.

⁸⁵ The U.S. study cited in footnote 79 concluded that: 1) The awareness that even one’s most personal sins wound the body of Christ and detract from the holiness of the Church is weak. 2) The ecclesial dimension of sin needs to be reflected upon and articulated anew for the people of our own day. 3) The Church as the community which reconciles and mediates forgiveness in the sacramental forum must be seen in a more organic way. It went on to say that: “Much of this territory was covered in the synod exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*. Dioceses and parishes might well undertake a thorough examination of the teaching of John Paul II on the sacrament in its ecclesial and social dimensions as a first step toward bringing about an appropriate renewal of faith and the practice which derives from faith.” CNS Documentary Service, *Origins* 19, no.38 (February 22, 1990): 621.

⁸⁶ Dallen observes: “My suspicion is that the sense of sin is not so much lost as changing, shifting from a focus on acts to a focus on persons and relationships. Sin is now seen more in terms of its effects on relationships with people and God – alienation and isolation. God’s graciousness overcomes this sin by establishing community in Christ. Thus, the counter to sin is not ritual cleansing or the ritual payment of penalty but rebuilding relationships. The worship experience within which the need to rebuild relationships is addressed is then clearly a sacrament of communal reconciliation rather than of individual forgiveness.” James Dallen, “Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance.” *Worship* 64, no.5 (September, 1990): 395-396.

⁸⁷ Tom Elich, ed., Quarterly Bulletin of the Liturgical Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, *Liturgy News* 29, no.2 (Brisbane: Rapid Offset, June 1999): 2.

There is currently no formal ritual acknowledgement of the reality and the damaging effects of social sin in the penitential practice of the Catholic Church. Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed analysis of the theological concept of social sin in order to help expound how such a ritual acknowledgement might be achieved.

CHAPTER 2

Social Sin

Although there is currently no official ritual for acknowledging social sin in the Catholic Church, there are several important Church documents which deal with the concept of social sin. A brief outline of the more significant Church documents dealing with social sin uncovers some of the underlying theological tensions preventing the full ritual acknowledgement of social sin in the current penitential practices of the Church. Chief among these is a theology which is still heavily (if not solely) centred on personal sin.

2.1 Historical and Theological Underpinnings

Social sin is a contemporary theological concept that has only begun to emerge since the early 1960s. James E. Hug cites the publication of Pope John XXIII's social encyclical *Pacem In Terris* as an important starting point in the evolution of the concept of social sin.⁸⁸ Another important landmark in the theological recognition of social sin in the Catholic Church was the Second Vatican Council which recognised that sin could occur as a result of factors in the wider social environment. The Council states:

Man is greatly helped by life in society, on the other hand it cannot be denied that man is often turned away from the good and urged to do evil by the social environment in which he lives. As it is, man is prone to evil, but whenever he meets a situation where the effects of sin are to be found, he is exposed to further inducements to sin.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Hug writes: "The publication of *Pacem In Terris* in 1961 inaugurated a period of rapid expansion in the Catholic Church's social consciousness and social teaching. Major social documents appeared every second or third year throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's. The age of global consciousness had opened." James E. Hug, "Social Sin, Cultural Healing." *Chicago Studies* 23, no.3 (November, 1984): 333.

⁸⁹ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Gaudium et spes," para.25, 926.

Between September 29 and October 29, 1983 the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held in Rome to discuss the topic of Reconciliation and Penance in the Catholic Church. This synod gave rise to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (R et P). In this document, Pope John Paul II officially recognised the growing theological importance and significance of the concept of social sin in the contemporary world. Pope John Paul II wrote: “We must ask what was being referred to by those who, during the preparation of the synod and in the course of its actual work, frequently spoke of social sin.”⁹⁰ It is likely that the Pope was referring to comments made by the Latin American bishops who contributed significantly to the recognition of social sin in the synod proceedings.⁹¹ The General Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Puebla in 1979 defined social sin as the objectification of sin in the economic, social, political and ideological-cultural fields.⁹² The ‘preferential option for the poor’⁹³ and the transformation of the sinful structures of the Church also featured heavily in this General Conference, which the Latin-American bishops described as “an external expression of inward conversion.”⁹⁴

In R et P Pope John Paul II outlines three different theological understandings of social sin: ‘social’ in that every sin affects others;⁹⁵ ‘social’ in the sense that some social sins represent a direct attack on others;⁹⁶ and

⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.16, 55.

⁹¹ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. (New York: Cliff Street Books, 2001), 473-474. Weigel suggests that the significant mention of social sin in R et P may well have been the emphasis placed on it by bishops influenced by liberation theology.

⁹² See Peter E. Fink, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 1198.

⁹³ This was a fundamental term used during the General Conferences of Latin American Bishops at Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979. The ‘preferential option for the poor’ is a particular focus of liberation theology, which challenges sinful structures in the Church which work against this so-called ‘preferential option’.

⁹⁴ Fink, *New Dictionary*, 1198.

⁹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.16, 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

'social' in the sense that unjust relationships between human communities (such as class struggle) are sinful.⁹⁷ He also asserts that social sins are only social by way of analogy, owing to the fact that these sins have over time become structural and in a very real sense anonymous.⁹⁸ This cautious recognition of social and structural sin is reaffirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). The CCC states:

Sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among men. Sin gives rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to divine goodness. "Structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a social sin.⁹⁹

The term 'social sin' when viewed in all three senses points to a contemporary understanding of the effects of the accumulation of personal sins within any organisational structure, be it the Church, a corporate structure, a bureaucracy, a country, or indeed a particular segment of a country's population. The recognition of structural social sin as the accumulation of social sin over time in political and economic structures was officially recognised by the Catholic Church in 1984. In the document, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation*, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recognised that: "To be sure, there are structures which are evil and which cause evil and which we must have the courage to change."¹⁰⁰ The recognition of structural social sin was reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II in his 1988 Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Pope John Paul II writes:

⁹⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁹⁹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush, NSW: St Paul's, 1994), para.1869, 457.

¹⁰⁰ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation*. (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1984), para.15, 22.

Sin and structures of sin are categories which are seldom applied to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily gain a profound understanding of the reality that confronts us unless we give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us. Obviously, not only individuals fall victim to this double attitude of sin; nations and blocs of nations can do so too. And this favours even more the introduction of the structures of sin of which I have spoken.¹⁰¹

However it is not only nations and blocs of nations that can fall victim to structural social sin. The Catholic Church itself has also fallen prey to its damaging effects. An example of this is the blight of clergy sexual abuse in Australia and indeed throughout the world. Although originating from individual sinful actions, nevertheless, over time the abuse has accumulated because of structural silence and cover-up, and thus clergy sexual abuse unfortunately has become an example of a structural social sin.¹⁰² Retired Bishop Geoffrey Robinson has been particularly outspoken in his condemnation of the structural silence and cover up of clerical sexual abuse in Australia. Robinson writes: "Sexual abuse of minors by a significant number of priests and religious, together with the attempts by many Church authorities to conceal the abuse, constitute one of the ugliest stories ever to emerge from the Catholic Church."¹⁰³

In R et P the Pope warns against an erroneous use of the term social sin which tends to lessen or diminish the responsibility and moral culpability of the individual when he writes: "This usage contrasts social sin and personal

¹⁰¹ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *On Social Concerns*, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis." (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988), para.36-37, 77 and 79.

¹⁰² See C. Colt Anderson, "Bonaventure and the Sin of the Church." *Theological Studies* 63, no.4 (December, 2002): 667- 689. This raises the theological issue of whether the Church can sin. Using the ecclesiology of St. Bonaventure as a focal point, Anderson argues that the notion of ecclesial sin in relation to the sexual abuse of minors is not only valid, but a necessary theological concept.

¹⁰³ Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*. (Mulgrave, Victoria: John Garratt Publishing, 2007), 7.

sin, not without ambiguity, in a way that leads more or less unconsciously to the watering down and almost the abolition of personal sin, with the recognition only of social guilt and responsibilities.”¹⁰⁴ In *R et P* Pope John Paul II also suggests that:

Whenever the Church speaks of situations of sin, or when she condemns as social sins certain situations or the collective behaviour of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins.¹⁰⁵

The Pope is careful to maintain that however much social sin may take on a life and a reality of its own, the individual and personal dimensions of social sin can never be disregarded completely. This stance leads to an important discussion between how the concepts of personal sin and social sin inter-relate, especially in the arena of their ritual acknowledgement.

2.2 Relating Personal Sin and Social Sin

When commenting on the continuing need for the Sacrament of Penance as a remedy for personal sin, Pope John Paul II reinforces the prevailing view that the First Rite of Reconciliation still remains “the only normal and ordinary way of celebrating the sacrament.”¹⁰⁶ This statement echoes the *Code of Canon Law*, which affirms the necessity of the ‘traditional’ form of Reconciliation (Rite 1) as the ordinary rite to be used in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance: “Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the sole ordinary means by which a member of the

¹⁰⁴ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*. para.16, 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰⁶ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*. para.32, 128.

faithful who is conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and with the Church.”¹⁰⁷

The *Statement of Conclusions* also reinforces this personal understanding of sin when it states: “The communal celebration of Penance with individual confessions and absolution (Rite 2) should be encouraged especially in Advent and Lent, but it cannot be allowed to prevent regular, ready access to the traditional form (Rite 1) for all who desire it.”¹⁰⁸ The question of access mentioned here is somewhat perplexing. The problem in Australia is definitely not one of access, as Rite 1 is readily available for penitents who so desire it. The real problem, and it is one that the *Statement of Conclusions* seems to overlook, is that Australian penitents appear to demonstrate little desire to access it. The theological preference for the use of Rite 1 in R et P tends to detract from the ground-breaking acknowledgement of the reality of social and structural sin in this document and reveals a theology which still remains tethered to an individual understanding of sin. Ever since the tariffed model of penance came to dominance in the early Middle Ages, the primary theological focus in the theology of the Sacrament of Penance has been on an individual and personal understanding of the reality of sin.

The preference for individual forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, as outlined in R et P, causes Pope John Paul II to recognise social sin only in an analogous sense.¹⁰⁹ Dallen suggests that R et P missed an opportunity to bring the much needed social dimensions of sin, and in particular the growing reality of structural social sin, into the liturgical and sacramental rituals of the Church. Dallen writes: “Though he (Pope John Paul II) admits the existence of situations of sin, he is reluctant to speak of structural sin,

¹⁰⁷ *The Code of Canon Law*, #960, 218.

¹⁰⁸ *The Statement of Conclusions*, para.45.

¹⁰⁹ R et P, para.16, 58.

fearing that such language would erode individual moral responsibility. He subsequently attaches relatively little importance to work toward structural reform. Exhortation to changing society and its sinful structures is not prominent here."¹¹⁰

The reinforcement of the personal dimensions of sin, to the detriment of its social and structural manifestations, is a tacit admission that it is far simpler to hold an individual person to account than it is to hold an entire system, structure, bureaucracy, country or indeed Church to account. In the penitential arena of social sin, institutional sins of omission are often just as damaging (if not sometimes more damaging) than are personal sins of commission. It is important to recognise the urgent contemporary need for the acknowledgement of social sin, above and beyond its consideration in its personal and individual manifestations.¹¹¹ This is not to downplay the importance of sin when viewed in the individual dimension as sin is always the result of an individual's actions (or in some cases inaction). However it is also the case that social sin, as the accumulation of individual sins to a systemic degree, is no less real and no less damaging as sins committed by individuals.

Just as there is ritual recognition for personal sin, social sin also needs some form of ritual recognition. Dallen suggests: "Sin does always originate from persons, yet the accumulated effect enters into the structures of human society and leads to further sin. Sin socially manifested is no less sinful than

¹¹⁰ James Dallen, "Reconciliatio et Paenitentia: The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation." *Worship* 59, no. 2 (March, 1985): 100, 103.

¹¹¹ Fink states: "The name social sin has been generated to identify institutional and structural forces which produce oppression, assault the quality of human life, induce neglect of fundamental human dignity, cause alienation among groups, and, what may be their worst manifestation, stir war among peoples. It is a reality that is larger than the sum of the personal sins of the people involved. In fact, it is not infrequently contributed by well meaning people acting in good faith to achieve what appears to them to be a good. Yet, nonetheless division and destruction result." Fink, "Alternative 3," 128.

its individual manifestations.”¹¹² David Coffey considers that recognition of the reality and consequences of social sin represents a marked shift away from the historical focus on the personal dimensions of sin. He writes: “The conclusion we can draw from this teaching is that the Sacrament of Reconciliation exists for the forgiveness of personal sins rather than social sin. Another way of putting this is to say that the sacrament exists for the forgiveness of persons as such rather than communities as such.”¹¹³

The Second Vatican Council’s revision of the Sacrament of Penance to include the communal and ecclesial dimensions of sin (Rites 2 and 3) without a corresponding and commensurate understanding and appreciation of social sin, and the damaging effects of the accumulation of social sin on the worshiping community, has contributed to the Church’s continued focus on the First Rite of Reconciliation to the exclusion of other equally important notions of sin and repentance. Joe Grayland writes: “Our contemporary practice accepts that grave public sin will be forgiven in a private forum and not through public acts of restitution and liturgical rites of restoration. This individualistic understanding is still very much a theological feature of the Sacrament of Penance to this very day.”¹¹⁴ As a result of this mentality, the Sacrament of Penance seems to be stuck in what Scott Detisch describes as a ‘first naiveté.’¹¹⁵

¹¹² Dallen, “Reconciliatio et Paenitentia,” 110.

¹¹³ David M. Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*. Lex Orandi Series. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 5.

¹¹⁴ Joe Grayland, “The Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation in Relation to Public Sin: Remembering the Place of Restitution.” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 81, no.2 (April, 2004): 162.

¹¹⁵ Detisch comments: “The renewal of the sacrament is stuck in what Paul Ricoeur would call a first naiveté. That naiveté reduces Reconciliation to Confession and expects the embodiment of God’s forgiveness to be exclusively in a private ritual encounter with a confessor, who hopefully exhibits the pastoral features of Christ. Where is the community in this experience? Where is the healing that is to transform penitents’ lives and lead them toward becoming ministers of reconciliation themselves (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-20)?” Scott P.

There is a lingering stress in official magisterial documents on the importance of personal sin over social sin. Because of this prevailing theological position, it could be claimed that the Sacrament of Penance is failing to respond to the signs of the times which are speaking of the growing theological significance of social sin among the broader Church community. The Catholic Church needs to establish meaningful rituals that acknowledge both the reality and the damaging effects of social sin so that the current liturgical rites of the Church may continue to be broadly relevant, necessary and experienced meaningfully in the contemporary world.

2.3 Group Apologies for Social Sin

Group apologies for social sin (both secular and ecclesial) have become increasingly prevalent in the contemporary world, particularly since the early 1990's. Before this time they were only ever very rarely encountered. Michel-Rolph Trouillot comments: "Collective apologies have not been a hallmark of human history. Indeed they have been rather rare. An inherent feature of this ritual wave of collective apologies is its very novelty."¹¹⁶ In many respects, it could be claimed that the recent evolution of an understanding of social sin has contributed to the desire for group apologies. As we have already seen, social sin as a theological term has now been officially recognised by the Catholic Church.¹¹⁷

The secular world has now also begun to recognise the need to establish effective avenues for changing harmful (sinful) structures and for beginning to heal the detrimental effects of negative social policy, particularly in the

Detisch, "The Sacrament of Reconciliation: In Need of a Second Naiveté." *Worship* 77, no.3 (May, 2003): 196.

¹¹⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Abortive Rituals: Historical Apologies in the Global Era." *International Journal of Post Colonial Studies* 2, issue 2 (July, 2000): 177.

¹¹⁷ See Pope John Paul II, *R et P.* para.16, 54-60.

fields of politics and economics. Several benchmark moments in the development of group apologies for social sin are worth noting:¹¹⁸

- The establishment of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 to help South Africans to overcome the social scourge of apartheid.
- A consortium of Swiss Banks established a 'superfund' in 1997 to compensate survivors of the Nazi holocaust for lost wages and assets.
- In March 2000 Pope John Paul II publicly apologised for the faults of the Catholic Church over the course of two millennia in a moving *purification of memory* liturgy held in St Peter's Basilica, Rome.
- In July 2002 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) apologised for the deaths caused in Irish sectarian violence.
- In September 2003 the Presidents of Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro exchanged apologies for the evils perpetrated by their respective countries in civil war.
- In the corporate world a host of Chief Executive Officers have publicly apologised to shareholders for a whole host of misdeeds and misdemeanours. For example, in February 2007 in The United States David Neeleman, C.E.O. of Jet-Blue, apologised to thousands of disgruntled passengers who missed flights due to adverse weather and corporate mismanagement.¹¹⁹
- In February 2008 the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised in the Australian Parliament to Aboriginals forcibly

¹¹⁸ The following apologies are listed on the website *Political Apologies and Reparations*: <http://political-apologies.wlu.ca/index.php> (accessed June, 2008).

¹¹⁹ Apology broadcast on 'You Tube': <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V2ff3easYc&feature=related> (accessed May 3, 2008). However, the question as whether or not this apology (and others like them) was a genuine apology, or made because they 'got caught' still remains.

removed from their families in the government sponsored policy of white assimilation known as the Stolen Generations.

- In June 2008 the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, apologised in the Canadian Parliament to the Indian communities of that country for the systemic government policy of assimilation.
- In July 2008 Pope Benedict XVI offered a public apology to the survivors of clergy sexual abuse whilst visiting Sydney Australia for the World Youth Day celebrations.

All of these contemporary examples show that attempts are being made around the world to foster unity and promote reconciliation via the use of group apologies. Robert Rotberg comments: "Public acts of contrition are able to assist, accelerate or commence the process of post-traumatic reconciliation in a manner that enables a nation-state to build or rebuild. Without the conferring of apology, a post-conflict nation-state may remain no more than a collective of contending sections and groups in search of a whole."¹²⁰

Secular group apologies often employ symbolism and terminology that more traditionally have been ascribed to the religious (and particularly Christian) realm. They utilise terms such as peace, truth, healing, memory, forgiveness and reconciliation. The use of the word reconciliation is of particular interest in secular group apologies. Neil Brown points out: "Reconciliation expresses what has become a significant and important social theme for our times: whether it is Aboriginal reconciliation, reconciliation with the earth, reconciliation for the wrongs of the Second World War, or reconciliation between Churches, the honest acknowledgement of wrong-doing and

¹²⁰ Robert Rotberg as quoted in Barkan and Karn, "Group Apology as Ethical Imperative," 8.

mutual forgiveness are perceived as the only way to heal long-standing hurts and grievances."¹²¹

The use of ritual in group apologies for social sin can allow a group apology to speak in ways that words alone could never convey. Robert Schreiter recognises: "The power of ritual is such that it can involve collective groups and speak in actions much louder than words."¹²² Many times public group apologies are framed in party political terms. Marc Howard Ross comments:

Understanding the power of a group's narrative requires that we examine the symbolic and ritual dimensions of reconciliation. Because of the political complexity surrounding the use of apology and reparations, acknowledgement may be an especially useful mechanism for achieving at least partial reconciliation and ritual and symbolic action can be crucial in the dynamics of acknowledgement.¹²³

A key focus for this paper is that of the liturgical performance of ritual as a source of theological reflection, i.e. asking: do the liturgical rituals of the Church actually accomplish what they set out to achieve? Chapter 3 will analyse the ritual performance of group apologies for social sin which can be used as theological sources to inform the ritual acknowledgement of social sin in the Catholic Church.

¹²¹ Neil Brown, "The Communal Nature of Reconciliation – Moral and Pastoral Reflections." *The Australasian Catholic Record* 77, no.1. (January, 2000): 8.

¹²² Robert Schreiter, "Religion as a Source for Reconciliation." in *Reconciliation in a World of Conflicts*, Luiz C. Susin and Maria P. Aquino, eds. Concilium 2003/5 (London: SCM Press, 2003), 115.

¹²³ Ross, "Ritual and the Politics of Reconciliation," 210.

CHAPTER 3

Ritual Case-Studies

Margaret Mary Kelleher pioneered the use of ritual as source for 'doing' liturgical theology. She writes: "My own attempt is to place theology in dialogue with ritual studies in order to shape a method which incorporates liturgical performance among the sources of data for doing liturgical theology."¹²⁴ Following Kelleher's lead, an analysis of the ritual performance of group apologies for social sin as theological sources could be used fruitfully to inform the ritual acknowledgement of social sin in the future penitential practices of the Catholic Church. After outlining the ritual elements of the Rite of Penance, three group apologies for social sin will be analysed as ritual case-studies:

- Pope John Paul II's *purification of memory* apology, as part of the 'Universal Day of Pardon' in the Catholic Church in March 2000.
- The Australian national apology to the Stolen Generations in February 2008.
- Pope Benedict XVI's apology to survivors of clergy sexual abuse, as a part of the proceedings of the World Youth Day Sydney in July 2008.

3.1 The Rite of Penance

The Sacrament of Penance is comprised of four distinct ritual elements which were clearly defined during the Council of Trent¹²⁵ and are incorporated in

¹²⁴ Margaret Mary Kelleher, "The Communion Rite: A Study of Roman Catholic Liturgical Performance." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5/2 (Summer, 1991): 99.

Kelleher employs a number of pioneering ideas for the use of ritual as a source of theological reflection in liturgical theology. She develops her ideas in several other related works, including "Liturgical Theology: A Task and Method." *Worship* 62/1 (January, 1988): 2-25 and "Hermeneutics in the Study of Liturgical Performance." *Worship* 67/4 (July, 1993): 292-318.

¹²⁵ See Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, para.1622-1634, 629-634.

the RP: Contrition,¹²⁶ Confession,¹²⁷ Acts of Penance (Satisfaction)¹²⁸ and Absolution.¹²⁹ The liturgical performance of these four elements is the necessary precondition for the efficacious reception of the Sacrament of Penance.¹³⁰ *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* discusses Reconciliation and Penance in the Catholic Church by first commenting on the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32) which is described as a ‘parable of reconciliation.’¹³¹ The parable of the Prodigal Son is used in R et P to illustrate the meaning of each of the four ritual elements comprising the Sacrament of Penance.

3.1.1 *Contrition*

The *Rite of Penance* describes the ritual element of contrition as: “The most important act of the penitent, which is heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more. We can only approach the kingdom of Christ by *metanoia*.”¹³² In the parable it is precisely when the younger son comes to his senses and returns back to his father that we see his heart-felt contrition (*metanoia*) at work.¹³³ R et P states that: “Contrition is the beginning and the heart of conversion, of that evangelical *metanoia* which brings the person back to God like the Prodigal Son returning to his Father, and which has in the Sacrament of Penance its visible sign and

¹²⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.6(a), 6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, para.6(b).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, para.6(c), 7.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, para.6(d).

¹³⁰ Grigassy states: “These four parts of the Sacrament of Penance are the conditions for the possibility of the sacrament’s proper effect of reconciliation.” Daniel P. Grigassy, “Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation: Forsaken or Disguised?” *Liturgical Ministry* 4 (Winter, 1995): 14.

¹³¹ *R et P*, 25. Chapter 1 of the document is entitled ‘A Parable of Reconciliation.’

¹³² *Ibid.*, para.6(a), 6.

¹³³ United Bible Societies, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Germany: C.H. Beck, 2001), 115. The Greek word ‘*metanoia*’ is translated as meaning repentance, a change of heart, a turning away from one’s sins and a change of way.

which perfects attrition. Hence upon this contrition of heart depends the truth of penance."¹³⁴

3.1.2 *Confession*

The RP describes confession as an "inner examination of heart and exterior accusation made in the light of God's mercy."¹³⁵ In the parable the confessional aspect is clearly seen when the younger son returns to his father and says: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men."¹³⁶ This confessional element has been an integral part of the penitential practice of the Church since the very early Church.¹³⁷ R et P notes: "It is a liturgical act, solemn in its dramatic nature, yet humble and sober in the grandeur of its meaning. It is the act of the Prodigal Son who returns to his Father and is welcomed by him with the kiss of peace. It is an act of honesty and courage."¹³⁸

3.1.3 *Act of Penance (Satisfaction)*

The RP describes the act of penance as: "true conversion completed for the sins by amendment of conduct, and also by the reparation of injury."¹³⁹ Acts of Penance remind us that our sins have wider social consequences. In the parable we see in the behaviour of the older brother the damaging social

¹³⁴ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.31, III, 120.

¹³⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.6(b), 6.

¹³⁶ Luke 15: 18-19.

¹³⁷ According to Hellwig, the word 'exomologesis' (i.e. praise in glory of God's mercy) has taken on a different understanding in later theological development (as an oral confession) than it had in the penitential practice of the very early Church. She writes specifically on the use of the term in the third century writings of Tertullian: "This had led some interpreters to conjecture that process was initiated by a confession to the bishop. More probably the confession involved was the whole process by which persons acknowledged themselves as sinful, in need of the help and intercession of the Church (that is the community of the faithful) and confident of the mercy of God." Monica K. Hellwig, *Sign of Reconciliation and Conversion*. (Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc, 1984), 33.

¹³⁸ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.31, III, 122.

¹³⁹ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.6(c), 7.

effects of the sin of the younger brother (i.e. the relationship between the two brothers has been severed). *R et P* states: "Man, every human being, is also this older brother. Selfishness makes him jealous, hardens his heart, blinds him and shuts him off from other people and from God."¹⁴⁰ The act of penance allows the penitent to show by their words and actions and that they are truly sorry for the damaging effects of their sins and seek, wherever possible, for these damaging effects to be appeased.

3.1.4 *Absolution*

In the Sacrament of Penance, after the three preceding ritual elements have been performed, God's forgiveness is symbolised ritually through sacramental absolution.¹⁴¹ The *RP* states that: "Through the sign of absolution God grants pardon to the sinner who in sacramental confession manifests his change of heart to the Church's minister, and thus the Sacrament of Penance is completed."¹⁴² In the sacramental sense, the communication of God's forgiveness occurs in the prayer of absolution.¹⁴³ In the parable, the moment of forgiveness (absolution) occurs in the father's embrace of the son. *R et P* explains that: "The most striking element of the parable is the father's festive and loving welcome of the returning son; it is a sign of the mercy of God who is always willing to forgive. Let us say at once: reconciliation is principally a gift of the heavenly Father."¹⁴⁴ However, the parable also illustrates that for true and lasting reconciliation, mutual

¹⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.6, 27.

¹⁴¹ The only current exception to this is in Rite 3, when absolution is given first and the other elements follow at a later stage. Absolution is not normally withheld pastorally, unless there are serious reasons for doing so. See *The Code of Canon Law*, #980, 223.

¹⁴² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.6(d), 7.

¹⁴³ The prayer of absolution is: "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and 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. Amen." *Ibid.*, para.46, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Pope John Paul II, *R et P*, para.5, 26.

forgiveness must occur not only between the younger son and the father, but also between the two brothers.¹⁴⁵ The true measure of human reconciliation lies in the mutual exchange of forgiveness and the restoration of breached human relationships.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the parable leaves the question of forgiveness between the two brothers unanswered as the older son stays outside and refuses to enter the family home.¹⁴⁷

These four ritual elements can also be helpful in providing useful points of reference and comparison in analysing the use of ritual in both secular and ecclesial group apologies for social sin.

3.2 Case-Study 1: The *Purification of Memory* Apology

The use of ritual in a contemporary group apology for social sin can be seen clearly in Pope John Paul II's public apology for the structural social sins of the Catholic Church over the course of two millennia. The Pope delivered this historic apology in a moving ceremony in St Peter's Basilica, Rome on March 12, 2000. This papal apology was steeped in the language and symbolism of Catholic liturgical ritual, and represented what the Pope

¹⁴⁵ Pope John Paul II writes: "The result of sin is the shattering of the human family, already begun with the first (original) sin and now reaching its most extreme form on the social level...The mystery of sin is composed of this two-fold wound which the sinner opens in himself and in his relationship with his neighbour." R et P, para.15, 53-54.

¹⁴⁶ Marty suggests: "In the Christian tradition forgiveness always leads to reconciliation and reconciliation results from mutual experiences of forgiveness. Forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be separated." Martin E. Marty as quoted in Marc Howard Ross, "Ritual and the Politics of Reconciliation." in *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*, Bar-Siman-Tov Yaacov, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 206.

¹⁴⁷ Nouwen observes: "In the light of God I can finally see my neighbour as my brother, as the one who belongs as much to God as I do. But outside of God's house, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, lovers and friends become rivals and even enemies; each perpetually plagued by jealousies, suspicions and resentments." Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1994), 81.

described as a “purification of memory” within the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁸ A study of the ritual elements in this papal apology can reveal much about the self-image of the Church¹⁴⁹ as it attempted to confront the contemporary reality of social sin.

3.2.1 *Contrition*

Given the reluctance of Pope John Paul II only a decade earlier in R et P to acknowledge fully the reality of the structural and systemic effects of social sin in the Church (except only in analogous terms) it came as something of a surprise when in 1994 the Pope signalled his intention to address the reality and effects of structural social sin in the Catholic Church and express contrition for these sins.¹⁵⁰ During the June consistory of the College of Cardinals in 1994, a position paper (*Pro Memoria*) signalling the Pope’s intention to express public contrition for Church’s sins of the past was discussed. As predicted, Pope John Paul II officially signalled his intention to express contrition for certain structural social sins¹⁵¹ of the Church in the lead up to the Jubilee Year of 2000. In the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio*

¹⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Bull of the Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 “Incarnationis Mysterium.”* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1998): 21. *Purification of Memory* is a term coined by Pope John Paul II in the lead up to the Great Jubilee Year in 2000.

¹⁴⁹ Kelleher comments: “Since liturgy is ritual action in which local Christian assemblies reveal and shape their identities, one can expect an ecclesial self-image to be disclosed in liturgical performance.” Kelleher, “The Communion Rite,” 101-102.

¹⁵⁰ O’Grady notes the reaction of some of the Cardinals to this shift in papal policy: “The proposal submitted to the June consistory of the College of Cardinals, calling for an extensive examination of conscience by the Catholic Church leading to an open confession of sins, errors, and crimes committed in the Church’s name, did not rouse great enthusiasm among the 114 cardinals from fifty-four countries attending the consistory. One Cardinal who took part told me that the majority opposed the suggestion, but he predicted that this was unlikely to dissuade Pope John Paul II from going ahead with it.” Desmond O’Grady, “The Perils of Penance. Contrition is not a Cardinal’s Virtue.” *Commonweal* 121, issue 18 (October 21, 1994): 7.

¹⁵¹ The word ‘certain’ here is used deliberately. One of the more glaring omissions from the list of structural social sins was the blight of clergy sexual abuse, a topic still very much on the agenda in Australia.

Adveniente Pope John Paul II outlined the social realities of these sins¹⁵² and the need to address them, writing: “These sins of the past unfortunately still burden us and remain ever present temptations. It is necessary to make amends for them, and earnestly to beseech Christ’s forgiveness.”¹⁵³

In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* Pope John Paul II does not spell out specifically what sins of the Church were in need of forgiveness, however he does list certain broad areas where social sin has become prevalent in the Church over the course of many centuries: sins detrimental to Church unity,¹⁵⁴ intolerance and violence in the service of truth,¹⁵⁵ religious indifference,¹⁵⁶ and grave forms of injustice and exclusion.¹⁵⁷ In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* the Pope also cites certain scriptural (and in particular Old Testament) texts in support of the need to address communally the reality of social sin in the Church.¹⁵⁸ Highlighting the text from Leviticus 25: 1-55 concerning the prescriptions for the sabbatical year, the Pope draws implications for the Great Jubilee Year of 2000 CE: “In the sabbatical year, in addition to the freeing of slaves, the law also provided for the cancellation of all debts in accordance with precise regulations. And all this was to be done in honour of God.”¹⁵⁹ Leviticus 25: 1-55 is important because it illustrates the ancient Jewish understanding of the

¹⁵² Pope John Paul II writes: “As the second millennium of Christian history draws to a close, the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his gospel. It is fitting that the Church should make this passage with a clear awareness of what has happened to her during the last ten centuries. Acknowledging the weakness of the past is an act of honesty and courage.” Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, “The Third Millennium.” (Homebush NSW: St Pauls, 1994), para.33, 52-53.

¹⁵³ Ibid., para.34, 54.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., para.35, 56.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., para.36, 57.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 58.

¹⁵⁸ For example, Pope John Paul II highlights the Genesis creation narrative: “Going in search of man through his Son, God wishes to persuade man to abandon the paths of evil. Making him abandon those paths means making man understand that he is taking the wrong path; it means overcoming the evil which is found everywhere in human history.” Ibid., para.7, 17.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., para.12, 25.

social dimensions of sin. The sabbatical year was designed to encourage the development of social consciousness among the Jewish people, through such things as the liberation of slaves, the abolition of debts and the restoration of property.

In subsequent documents Pope John Paul II further elaborated his intention for a true *metanoia* of the Catholic Church in the lead up to the Jubilee Year. In *Incarnationis Mysterium* the Pope writes: “As the successor of Peter, I ask in this year of mercy that the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters.”¹⁶⁰ The phrase that Pope John Paul II employs for this collective expression of regret and request for forgiveness is *purification of memory*. Pope John Paul II first uses this term in the 1995 Encyclical Letter on ecumenism *Ut Unim Sint*: “The purification of memory calls everyone to make an act of courage and humility in recognising the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian.”¹⁶¹

The term *purification of memory* is extremely significant as it represents a new historical phase in the theological evolution of the Church as it begins to recognise the effects of structural and systemic social sin. The International Theological Commission (ITC)¹⁶² acknowledges this when it states: “Indeed, in the entire history of the Church there are no precedents for requests for forgiveness by the Magisterium for past wrongs.”¹⁶³ In contrast to the initial reluctance from parts of the College of Cardinals, in the wider Church the

¹⁶⁰ Pope John Paul II, “*Incarnationis Mysterium*”, para.11, 23.

¹⁶¹ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *That They May All Be One*, “*Ut Unum Sint*.” (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1995), para.21.

¹⁶² The ITC was established in 1969. It is a Dicastery of the Roman Curia, consisting of 30 Catholic theologians. Its central function is to advise the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) of the Catholic Church.

¹⁶³ International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2000), 11.

call of Pope John Paul II for a purification of memory was welcomed more enthusiastically.¹⁶⁴

3.2.2 Confession

Despite some opposition, Pope John Paul II's desire for a public confession of the faults of the past through a collective purification of memory went ahead. Pope John Paul II signalled his intention to confess the sins of the past in a special purification of memory ritual during the Jubilee Year. The day chosen for this *purification of memory* was March 12, 2000, the first Sunday of Lent¹⁶⁵ which the Pope had earmarked as a 'Universal Day of Pardon'.¹⁶⁶ The inclusion of the purification of memory ritual within the context of a special Mass to be celebrated in St Peter's Basilica in Rome was highly significant.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ O'Grady is one who was enthusiastic about a papal apology. He writes: "This is not cringe-in-the-corner stuff. The context is buoyant: taking this one step backward will prepare a great leap forward. The pope has a sense of urgency: the third millennium is at hand, humanity is greatly at risk, and to save it the Church must act with spiritual dynamism. But that must begin with *metanoia*, a spiritual about face within the Church and among its faithful." O'Grady, "The Perils of Penance," 7.

Sicari also shares this sense of optimism when he writes: "To purify memory today means to let hope spring up from the past. It means to reach the past in the only way that we still can, namely by repentance and pardon." Antonio M. Sicari, "The Purification of Memory: The Narrow Gate of the Jubilee." *Communio* xxvii, no.4 (Winter, 2000): 639.

¹⁶⁵ The liturgical season of Lent, a period of 40 days, is penitential in its character.

¹⁶⁶ This 'Universal Day of Pardon' consisted primarily in the celebration of a Mass, concelebrated by Cardinals and Bishops. In his homily, Pope John Paul II reinforced his desire for a purification of memory. On the same day, during his traditional Angelus message, the Pope also spoke on the theme of purification of memory.

¹⁶⁷ The Vatican announced this unprecedented liturgy in the following way: "The Church, in a Eucharistic celebration at the beginning of her Lenten journey, confesses, proclaims and glorifies God's work within her during the past two thousand years of Christianity. Consequently, a liturgy seeking pardon from God for the sins committed by Christians down the centuries is not only legitimate; it is also the most fitting means of expressing repentance and gaining purification. Pope John Paul II, in a primatial act, confesses the sins of Christians over the centuries down to our own time. This liturgy, by recalling the sins committed, concretizes the request for forgiveness and opens the way to a commitment made not only before God but also before men; it inaugurates a journey of conversion and change vis-à-vis the past. Confessing our sins and the sins of those before us is a fitting act on the part of the Church, which has always felt bound to acknowledge the failures of her children and to confront the truth about sins committed. By placing the highpoint of the confession of sins within the context of the liturgy, Pope John Paul II wishes to demonstrate that this act has its own inner meaning and aims at the purification of memory and at

Given the unprecedented nature of this liturgical expression of confession for social sins, Pope John Paul II specifically chose the Penitential Rite of the Mass (see 4.2.3.2) as the ritual context in which to conduct the *purification of memory*. A Cardinal or Archbishop introduced each of the petitions of confession and the Holy Father then led each prayer of forgiveness, followed by the response: *Kyrie eleison*.¹⁶⁸ The *purification of memory* ritual did not include in specific detail all of the systemic social sins that were committed in the history of the Church. The Presentation for the liturgy states: “The reference to errors and sins in a liturgy must be frank and capable of specifying guilt; yet given the number of sins committed in the course of twenty centuries, it must necessarily be rather summary.”¹⁶⁹ In total there were seven petitions of confession for social sin:¹⁷⁰

- Confession of Sins in General.¹⁷¹
- Confession of Sins Committed in the Service of Truth.¹⁷²
- Confession of Sins which have Harmed the Unity of the Body of Christ.¹⁷³

reconciliation between Christians and between the Church and humanity.” Vatican Basilica, “First Sunday of Lent “Day of Pardon” Presentation, 12 March 2000. para.2-4, 7.

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000312_present (accessed March, 2008).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., para.52, 31-32. The Greek translation is literally “Lord Have Mercy.”

¹⁶⁹ Vatican Basilica, “First Sunday of Lent ‘Day of Pardon’ Presentation,” 12 March 2000. para.5.

¹⁷⁰ Vatican Basilica, “Universal Prayer: Confession of Sins and Asking for Forgiveness”, 12 March 2000. Website:

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000312_prayer-day-pardon_en.html (accessed March, 2008). The *purification of memory* liturgy appears in Appendix I.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. Led by Cardinal Gantin, Dean of the College of Cardinals.

¹⁷² Ibid. Led by Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (and the future Pope Benedict XVI). The former name for this Congregation was the Congregation of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. In 1542, Pope Paul III established this as a permanent congregation. It had the tasks of maintaining and defending the integrity of the faith and of examining and proscribing errors and false doctrines, it thus became the supervisory body of local Inquisitions. Amongst famous cases tried by the Roman Inquisition was that of Giordano Bruno in 1600 and Galileo Galilei in 1633. Pope John Paul II’s re-examination and acknowledgement of the Church’s error in the treatment of Galileo appear in the document ‘Lessons of the Galileo Case’ *Origins* 22, no.22 (November 12, 1992): 370-373.

- Confession of Sins against the People of Israel.¹⁷⁴
- Confession of Sins Committed in Actions against Love, Peace, the Rights of Peoples, and Respect for Cultures and Religions.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Ibid. Led by Cardinal Etchegaray, President of the Vatican's Jubilee Commission. The schism of the Christian Church into east and west in 1054 CE and the subsequent splintering of the western Christian Church during the Reformation are the subjects of Pope John Paul II's call to unity in the Encyclical Letter "Ut Unum Sint." In his Apostolic Letter *The Light of the East "Orientale Lumen"* (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1995), para.17, 35-36, Pope John Paul II expresses collective contrition for the western responsibility of the schism when he writes: "In the course of the thousand years now drawing to a close, even more than in the first millennium, ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded. These sins of the past unfortunately still burden us. It is necessary to make amends for them and earnestly beseech Christ's forgiveness. The sin of our separation is very serious: I feel the need to make fresh, courageous gestures, able to dispel any temptation to turn back." Pope Paul VI began this ecumenical process of restoration in 1965, asking for forgiveness from Patriarch Athenagoras. On Dec. 7 1965 both eastern and western Churches revoked the anathemas of excommunication that had been in force since the schism of 1054.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Led by Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Commission for Religious Relations with Jews (an Australian Cardinal). The Church was heavily criticised for failing to act during the Jewish persecutions by the Nazi regime during the Second World War. The culmination of Nazi anti-Semitism was the holocaust (*Shoah*). Pope Pius XII was also criticised for failing to act decisively. The bishops of France, Germany and Poland have each apologised for their silence during the terrible war crimes of the Second World War and the *Shoah*. The statement of apology from the bishops of France is particularly contrite. They stated: "For this failing of the Church of France and of her responsibility toward the Jewish people are part of our history. We confess this sin. We beg God's pardon, and we call upon the Jewish people to hear our words of repentance." *Origins* 27, no.40 (March 26, 1998): 673. Another groundbreaking event in improving Jewish-Christian relations came on March 16, 1998 when the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews released a document entitled 'We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah.' Pope John Paul II wrote: "The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close. As we prepare for the beginning of the third millennium the Church encourages her sons and daughters to purify their hearts through repentance of past errors and infidelities." *Origins* 27, no.40 (March 26, 1998): 670.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Led by Archbishop Hamao, President of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travellers. Amongst the sins committed against respect for cultures and religions was the sacking of Constantinople during the 4th Crusade. Kate Connolly reported on June 30, 2004: "On a visit to Athens in 2001 the Pope asked God's forgiveness for Catholics, who he said had committed sins against Orthodox Christians for 1,000 years. He has also apologised to Muslims for the Crusades... The Pope delivered an emotional apology to Orthodox Christians yesterday for the Catholic plundering of Constantinople eight centuries ago, saying it caused him "pain and disgust". He made his comments during a visit to the Vatican by Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and the head of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians. "In particular, we cannot forget what happened in the month of April 1204," the Pope said, in reference to the sacking of Constantinople by crusaders. "How can we not share, at a distance of eight centuries, the pain and disgust." website: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/1465857/Pope-says-sorry-for-crusaders%27-rampage-in-1204.html#continue> (accessed June, 2008).

- Confession of Sins against the Dignity of Women and the Unity of the Human Race.¹⁷⁶
- Confession of Sins in Relation to the Fundamental Rights of the Person.¹⁷⁷

Pope John Paul II's ritual confession of certain structural social sins over the course of two millennia within the context of the Penitential Rite of the Mass is unprecedented in the history of the Catholic Church. The papal *purification of memory* ritual represents a watershed moment for the liturgical recognition of social sin in the penitential practice of the Catholic Church.

Picture 3.2.2 Pope John Paul II Prays at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.¹⁷⁸



¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Led by Cardinal Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The treatment of women in the Church was specifically the subject of 2 documents authored by Pope John Paul II: Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988) and *Letter to Women* (1995). In the latter document the Pope writes: "Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. And if objective blame has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry." Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Women*. (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1995), para.3, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Led by Archbishop Thuan, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Clergy sexual abuse represents one of the major social sins against the fundamental rights of the person. This will be discussed in more detail in section 3.4 of this chapter.

¹⁷⁸ On March 26 2000, Pope John Paul II became the first Pope in history to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. This visit is one of the most moving images of his Pontificate. During the visit, the Pope placed a prayer in the wailing wall which read: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendents to bring your name to the nations: We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the covenant." *Origins* 29, no.42 (April 6, 2000): 679.

3.2.3 Act of Penance (*Satisfaction*)

In *Incarnationis Mysterium* Pope John Paul II recognised the ethical repercussions of social and systemic sin for all who belong to the Church, writing: “Because of the bond which unites us to one another in the mystical body, all of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgement of God who alone knows every heart, bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us.”¹⁷⁹ The theological notion of culpability for social sin was taken up by the ITC in its document *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*, which makes a clear distinction between personal subjective sin and social objective sin.¹⁸⁰ This important distinction serves to reinforce the point that social sins are objective types of sin to which we may not be able to impute personal moral culpability, but they are types of sin for which we can attribute communal moral responsibility. The negative effects of objective acts of social sin cry out for rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation just as powerfully as subjective acts of personal sin.

Far from acknowledging the reality of social sin only in analogical terms, in *Memory and Reconciliation* the ITC sees in social sin an objective reality which endures and lays a heavy burden on the consciences and memories of individuals over centuries and through generations.¹⁸¹ This represents a marked theological shift from the theological position of Pope John Paul II in

¹⁷⁹ Pope John Paul II “*Incarnationis Mysterium*”, para.11, 22.

¹⁸⁰ The ITC writes: “The request for forgiveness presupposes responsibility. Responsibility may be objective or subjective. Subjective responsibility ceases with the death of the one who performed the act; it is not transmitted through generations; the descendants do not inherit subjective responsibility for the acts of their ancestors. The only responsibility capable of continuing through history can be the objective kind, to which one may freely adhere subjectively or not. Thus, the evil done often outlives the one who did it through the consequences of behaviours that can become a heavy burden on the consciences and memories of the descendants. In certain situations the burden can be so heavy as to constitute a kind of moral and religious memory of the evil done, which by its nature is a common memory.” ITC, *Memory and Reconciliation*, 53-54.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

R et P. According to the ITC, the moral responsibility for social sin is objective and therefore is binding on all who belong to the Body of the Church. Seen in this context, the term *purification of memory* embodies sentiments of acknowledgement of corporate responsibility, guilt, contrition, penance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The term the ITC uses for these sentiments is *reconciled memory*.¹⁸²

One way of achieving this reconciled memory is for the Catholic Church to offer genuine acts of penance for the faults of the past by changing the socially sinful aspects of its institutional culture. However it is extremely difficult, if not impossible in some instances, to make satisfaction for the wrongs accumulated over the course of two millennia. Wherever possible, institutional change is perhaps the most effective act of penance for structural social sin. In recent years, genuine acts of penance from the Catholic Church in Australia for structural social sins have begun to emerge. For example, the need for a change of culture in the recognition of the role of women in the Australian Catholic Church was clearly identified in the 1999 report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia entitled: *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*.¹⁸³

¹⁸² The ITC writes: "Purifying the memory means eliminating from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past, in particular between the Church and the different religious, cultural and civic communities with whom she is related. The memory of division and opposition is purified and substituted by a reconciled memory, to which everyone in the Church is invited to be open." Ibid. 55.

¹⁸³ The report states: "The overwhelming response of the written submissions, public hearings and targeted groups sought greater participation for women in the Church, in particular through the involvement of women in decision making at all levels of the Church, an examination of the nature of ministry and of the ordination of women, reform of Church structures and practices to remove gender inequalities, establishment of a balance of men and women on all Church advisory groups, promotion of opportunities for women to participate in the leadership of the Church, and the full utilisation of women's talents in the service of the Church." *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*. A Research Project Undertaken for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference by the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace, Australian Catholic University and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes. (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1999), 386.

3.2.4 *Absolution*

The acknowledgement of the faults of the past through a purification of memory ritual does not necessarily mean that forgiveness and reconciliation have followed directly as a result. Although the Church (represented by Pope John Paul II) may have publicly apologised for social and systemic sin, whether or not the individuals upon whom these sins actually were committed have forgiven the Church is a question that is largely left unanswered. Especially in those cases dealing with social sins that have been committed through the course of the centuries, where many of those affected by those social sins are now deceased, forgiveness and reconciliation is almost impossible to ascertain.

However there are some outstanding examples where acceptance of the papal apology and the beginnings of forgiveness on behalf of the group(s) adversely affected have been expressed publicly. The Jewish response to the papal apology of March 2000 was mixed. Unofficially, many Jews still feel hurt at the silence of the Church during the *Shoah*. Officially the Rabbinic Committee for Inter-Religious Dialogue issued a statement saying: "The vast majority of the Jewish community feel grateful for what the Church has done. Through proper dialogue, we are convinced a genuine sense of reconciliation will emerge."¹⁸⁴ The papal apology for the sacking of Constantinople during the fourth crusade was apparently satisfactory enough for Patriarch Bartholomew I. Eight months after Pope John Paul II expressed contrition for this barbaric act the Patriarch formally accepted the Pope's apology and responded: "We receive with gratitude and respect your

¹⁸⁴ *Origins* 29, no.40 (March 23, 2000): 650.

cordial gesture for the tragic events of the Fourth Crusade.”¹⁸⁵ Examples of forgiveness such as these however are few and far between.

At the beginning of the Third Millennium, Pope John Paul II was able to look back at this *purification of memory* ritual as a significant step toward a positive future direction for the Catholic Church.¹⁸⁶ Given the importance of this ritual, the question must be asked as to whether this was intended solely to be a one-off liturgical event, or whether this type of ritual occasion and ecclesial attitude will endure and be allowed to continue to inform and enrich the existing penitential practices of the Church.¹⁸⁷ There is a compelling argument to suggest that this ritual should be more than just a one-off Jubilee Year of 2000 event.¹⁸⁸ An important precedent has now been set authoritatively by Pope John Paul II in his acknowledgement of social sin

¹⁸⁵ http://www.crusades-encyclopedia.com/apology_for_the_crusades.html (accessed June 16, 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Pope John Paul II reflects: “This Jubilee year has been strongly marked by the request for forgiveness. This is true not only for individuals, but for the entire Church, which has decided to recall the infidelities of so many of her children in the course of history, infidelities which have cast a shadow over her countenance as the Bride of Christ. How could we forget the moving Liturgy of 12 March 2000 in St Peter’s Basilica, at which, looking upon our crucified Lord, I asked forgiveness in the name of the Church for the sins of all her children? This purification of memory has strengthened our steps for the journey towards the future and has made us more humble and vigilant in our acceptance of the Gospel.” Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* “At the Beginning of the New Millennium.” (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2001), para.6, 11.

¹⁸⁷ Hinze asks: “Is it possible to maintain that ecclesial repentance and conversion can lead to the development and reform of Church doctrine and practice and that openness to such change can be a sign of genuine ecclesial repentance and conversion? If one admits the fuller reality of the sinful Church in its collective responsibility, one must be open to instances where reforming tradition can be the most appropriate act of penance.” Bradford E. Hinze, “Ecclesial Repentance and the Demands of Dialogue.” *Theological Studies* 61, no.2 (June, 2000): 235.

¹⁸⁸ The Presentation document hints at the possibility of this future development when it states: “Confessing the historical sins of Christians is not however aimed solely at the purification of memory: it is also meant to be an occasion for a change of mentality and certain attitudes in the Church, as well as the source of a new teaching for the future, in the consciousness that the sins of the past remain as temptations in the present. The confession of sins is a means of favouring dialogue, reconciliation and peace.” Vatican Basilica, “Day of Pardon” Presentation, 12 March 2000. para.7.

within the context of a liturgical setting.¹⁸⁹ The Pope's decision to purify the collective memory of the Church must be an attitude that can continue to inform and direct the liturgical rites of the Church in response to the damaging effects of social sin.

3.3 Case-Study 2: The Apology to the Stolen Generations

The use of ritual in a contemporary secular group apology for social sin is demonstrated in the national apology for the Stolen Generations of Australia's Indigenous peoples.¹⁹⁰ On February 13, 2008 in the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament of Australia, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd – on behalf of the Government and Federal Parliament of Australia – apologised to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for the official government action committed against them in the form of forced relocation of children who became known as the 'Stolen Generations'.¹⁹¹ This national apology was broadcast on television and radio as countless millions of Australians watched and was directed to those who still carry the pain and hurt of being forcibly removed from their families in the government sponsored policy of white assimilation. Although the Australian political apology to the Stolen Generations was not a liturgical ritual as such,

¹⁸⁹ See Margaret Pfeil, "Doctrinal Implications of Magisterial Use of the Language of Social Sin." *Louvain Studies* 27, no.2 (Summer, 2002): 132-152. Pfeil suggests that the recognition of social sin by the Church illustrates a much needed response to the suffering, violence and structures of sin in the contemporary world; thereby making the Church's teaching on sin more intelligible and credible.

¹⁹⁰ Wilcken comments on the socially sinful aspect of this policy, writing: "One has to say that sin is structured into Australian society, and has been since 1788. What might be described as the primal (or original) sin of the Australian people is the injustice done by European settlers to the original inhabitants of this country." John Wilcken, "A Theological Approach to Reconciliation," in Frank Brennan (ed.), *Reconciling our Differences: A Christian Approach to Recognising Aboriginal Land Rights*. (Richmond, Victoria: Aurora Books/David Lovell Publishing, 1992), 67.

¹⁹¹ Website: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/Rudd_Speech.pdf (accessed June, 2008). The 'Stolen Generations' occurred between the years 1910 and 1970, when up to 50,000 Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their families. The full text of the apology is contained in Appendix II.

nevertheless it did contain the performance of ritual elements (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) that make for a fruitful comparison with the ritual elements found in the RP.

3.3.1 *Contrition*

In the years prior to the Australian national apology Australians had already embarked on improving their levels of social consciousness toward Indigenous issues and in committing the nation to walking along the road to national reconciliation. Landmark events such as Paul Keating's Redfern Speech,¹⁹² and the National Sorry Day walks¹⁹³ contributed to the groundswell of national contrition for the plight of the Stolen Generations and the growing desire for a national apology to be made in service of Aboriginal reconciliation. However, it must also be acknowledged that not all Australians felt contrition, or the desire to apologise for the mistakes of the past. Prime Minister John Howard (1996-2007) steadfastly refused to apologise on the grounds that present Australians were not responsible for the misdeeds of past generations. Howard commented: "I profoundly reject

¹⁹² An instrumental speech on Aboriginal reconciliation was given by former Prime Minister Paul Keating at Redfern Park, Sydney on December 10, 1992. This speech marked the Australian launch of the International Year for the World's Indigenous Population: "It (reconciliation) begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us." Website: <http://apology.west.net.au/redfern.html> (accessed June, 2008).

¹⁹³ These nation-wide walks came as a response to the recommendations of the 'Bringing Them Home' Report, as a means of nationally recognising the pain caused by the forced removal of Indigenous children and the separation of Indigenous families. The first national 'sorry day' walk was held on May 26, 1998.

the black armband view of Australian history. I believe the balance sheet of Australian history is a very generous and benign one.”¹⁹⁴

The ethical dimensions of social sin are important to address when analysing the efficacy and indeed possibility of contrition for structural social sin. How can one assume individual responsibility, and thus moral culpability, for faults they have not personally committed? Chris Cunneen and Terry Libesman reject the notion of responsibility seen only in individual terms in favour of contrition that respects the collective memory and collective responsibility. They write: “Erasure occurs on a national level when the collective memory of the past is denied, diminished, or eliminated. A willingness to make judgements about past acts is essential to refute racist attitudes and regret previous acts of violence and genocide.”¹⁹⁵ Fortunately, it was this view of collective rather than individual responsibility (best represented in John Howard’s black armband view of history) that eventually carried favour with the majority of Australians. This view acknowledges that whilst the majority of Australians are not personally responsible for the policy of the Stolen Generations, they are collectively responsible to the degree that the consequences of what happened in the past are still a conscious national burden.¹⁹⁶

In his motion of reconciliation put to the House of Representatives in August 1999, John Howard was only prepared to go as far as to express “deep and

¹⁹⁴ John Howard as quoted in Mick Dodson, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Fourth Report*. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 1996), 14.

¹⁹⁵ Chris Cunneen and Terry Libesman, “An Apology for Expressing Regret?” *Meanjin* 59, no.1 (2000): 149.

¹⁹⁶ Prime Minister Rudd specifically addressed the notion of intergenerational responsibility in his apology speech when he said: “Let us remember the fact that the forced removal of children was happening as late as the early 1970s. The 1970s is not exactly a point in remote antiquity. It is well within the adult memory span of many of us. The uncomfortable truth for us all is that the parliaments of the nation, individually and collectively, enacted statutes and delegated authority under those statutes that made the forced removal of children on racial grounds fully lawful.” Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, House of Representatives, 2008.

sincere regret that Indigenous Australians suffered injustices under the practices of past generations and for the hurt and trauma that many Indigenous people continue to feel as a consequence of those practices.”¹⁹⁷ One of the problems with Howard’s black armband view of history was a Liberal political ideology centred on individual rather than on the collective notions of responsibility.¹⁹⁸ Danielle Celermajer comments: “Howard’s approach tracked the classical liberal jurisprudence of responsibility, a jurisprudence that is structurally hostile to encoding collective responsibility.”¹⁹⁹

The contrition felt by many Australians for the pain and suffering of the Stolen Generations, even though occurring in the secular context, had distinctly religious overtones.²⁰⁰ These religious overtones were recognised by secular political commentators. Celermajer comments: “To the modernist, staunch secularist ear, these religious overtones are likely to ring alarm bells.

¹⁹⁷ Website: <http://tizona.wordpress.com/2008/02/11/john-howards-motion-relating-to-reconciliation-as-put-to-parliament-august-1999/> (accessed June, 2008). Prime Minister Howard’s ‘Motion of Regret’ as put to the House of Representatives in the Federal Parliament on Thursday, August 26, 1999.

¹⁹⁸ This was also the view of a number of disgruntled ‘ordinary’ Australians who placed an advertisement in *The West Australian* under the title ‘An Open Letter to our Fellow Australians’: “We reject emphatically the notion of inter-generational guilt which the policy implies. It is wrong in principle, and of no practical benefit to Aboriginal people, to ask the present generation of Australians to apologise, through their government, for the assimilation policies of the past.” “An Open Letter to our Fellow Australians.” *The West Australian* (Friday, February 29, 2008): 43.

¹⁹⁹ Danielle Celermajer, “The Apology in Australia: Re-covenanting the National Imagery.” in *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, ed. Elazar Barkan (California, USA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 157-158.

²⁰⁰ Former Governor-General of Australia, Sir William Deane, described the contrition felt by many Australians in spiritual terms when he spoke of a national soul: “It should, I think, be apparent to all well-meaning people that true reconciliation between the Australian nation and its Indigenous peoples is not achievable in the absence of acknowledgement by the nation of the wrongfulness of the past dispossession, oppression and degradation of the Aboriginal people. That is not to say that individual Australians who had no part in what was done in the past should feel or acknowledge personal guilt. It is simply to assert our identity as a nation and the basic fact that national shame, as well as national pride, can and should exist in relation to past acts and omissions, at least when done or made in the name of the community or with the authority of government. Where there is no room for national pride or national shame about the past, there can be no national soul.” *Ibid.*, 177.

Perhaps, however, the emergence of a collective penitential ritual in the sphere of secular politics is a gesture toward finding a contemporary institution that can fill this gap in our political repertoire.”²⁰¹ Building on Celermajer’s comment, this dissertation argues that the reverse is also true: the emergence of collective penitential rituals for social sin in the sphere of the Church is a gesture toward filling the gap in the existing liturgical and sacramental repertoire.

The ritual element of contrition in the national apology was eventually expressed in the collective sense, even if individual Australians did not necessarily feel personally responsible for these social sins. The resistance from some Australians, including former Prime Minister John Howard, to express sorrow did not diminish the power of the contrition felt by many for the pain and grief felt by many Indigenous Australians. Indeed, the contrition expressed by Prime Minister Rudd had deeply spiritual overtones, causing Celermajer to describe the eventual apology as a “collective penitential ritual.” The national expression of contrition for the policy of the Stolen Generations was a groundbreaking national and historical event.

3.3.2 *Confession*

The confessional aspect of the public ritual apology for the social sin of the Stolen Generations was clearly apparent in Prime Minister Rudd’s speech given in the Federal Parliament. The Prime Minister said:

It is time to reconcile. It is time to say sorry. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendents and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry. We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology

²⁰¹ Ibid., 178.

be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.²⁰²

It is important to note in this speech the deliberate use of the word 'sorry' which is highly significant in the Aboriginal culture: "In many Aboriginal communities, sorry is an adapted English word used to describe the rituals surrounding death (Sorry Business). Sorry, in these contexts, is also often used to express empathy or sympathy rather than responsibility."²⁰³ The Prime Minister was making this apology on behalf of all non-Indigenous Australians, past and present. In doing so, he understood the symbolic power of the word sorry, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures: "Simply saying that you're sorry is such a powerful symbol. Powerful not because it represents some expiation of guilt. Powerful not because it represents any form of legal requirement. But powerful simply because it restores respect."²⁰⁴ This landmark apology has now been recognised internationally as a ground-breaking event in the nomenclature of group political apology.²⁰⁵

What is particularly interesting in the national apology speech given by the Prime Minister is that the 'confession of sins' also contained direct references to the stories of pain and hurt felt by the Stolen Generations themselves. Ross

²⁰² Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, House of Representatives, 2008.

²⁰³ *Reconcile – It's all Our Story*: FAQ. Website:

<http://www.reconcile.org.au/getsmart/pages/sorry/sorry--faq.php> (accessed June, 2008).

²⁰⁴ Ibid. Federal Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd speaking during the 2007 election campaign.

²⁰⁵ Barker and Karn note: "Australians have apologised for the past in order to exercise and redefine the moral principles of their community; in doing so, they deploy an expanded conception of social responsibility. Those who have subscribed to the apology do not necessarily accept causal responsibility for the moral lapses of the past (indeed, many were not alive when these injustices occurred). Instead, the apologists acknowledge that they live as members in whose name these misdeeds were committed." Barkan and Karn, "Group Apology as Ethical Imperative," 17.

recognises the importance of relating personal experiences in group apologies:

The accounts of the work of various truth commissions suggest that their effectiveness is not in their capacity to compile a complete and accurate historical record, but in the fact that the cases they hear resonate so widely among the population. Identification with the individual survivors and survivors' sense of being members of a community of survivors are central elements of this dynamic.²⁰⁶

This aspect of the Australian national apology, namely the degree to which individual stories of pain and grief were detailed and recorded, marks it out as being distinct amongst other examples of group apologies for social sin that have occurred internationally.²⁰⁷

Fully integrated into the national apology was a clearly confessional component.²⁰⁸ The confession of communal guilt was given by an

²⁰⁶ Ross, "Ritual and the Politics of Reconciliation," 210.

²⁰⁷ One of the accounts cited in Prime Minister Rudd's speech was the story of Nanna Nungala Fejo: "But then, sometime around 1932, when she was about four, she remembers the coming of the welfare men. They brought a truck, two white men and an Aboriginal stockman on horseback cracking his stock whip. The kids were found, they ran for their mothers, screaming, but they could not get away. They were herded and piled onto the back of the truck. Tears flowing, her mum tried clinging to the sides of the truck as her children were taken away to the bungalow in Alice, all in the name of protection. . . Nanna Fejo's is just one story. There are thousands, tens of thousands, of them: stories of forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their mums and dads over the better part of a century." Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, House of Representatives.

²⁰⁸ In relation to the earlier example of the secular apology to the Stolen Generations, it should be noted that the Catholic Church in Australia also played a part in the Stolen Generations, as many of the children forcibly removed found themselves in Catholic-run missions. For its part, the Australian Catholic Church has played a major role in working for reconciliation in recent years. This confession of responsibility was expressed in the *Bringing Them Home Report*: "With hindsight, we recognise that our provision of services enabled these policies to be implemented. We sincerely and deeply regret any hurt, however unwittingly caused, to any child in our care. To the best of our knowledge, at no time have the Church's child welfare services and organisations been given any legislative power or authority to forcibly or physically remove any children from their families. This is so in the case of any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. We do accept that there were cases where the actions of Church child welfare services and organisations were instrumental in keeping children separate from their families and in this respect the Church holds some

authoritative representative, Prime Minister Rudd, on behalf of the group(s) responsible for the social sin: non-Indigenous Australians past and present. The confession resonated with the survivors of the Stolen Generations because the stories of those affected by the sin were also told. These stories, though individual in nature, were indicative of and given on behalf of the general experience of the Stolen Generations and these tapped into the collective memory of others also affected. This public confession of corporate guilt was an integral step in the journey towards full reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

3.3.3 *Act of Penance (Satisfaction)*

Prime Minister Rudd's apology speech sought to acknowledge the importance of genuine acts of penance (satisfaction) for the policy of the

responsibility in playing a role for the state to keep these children separate from their families." Bringing Them Home: The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, April 1997. website: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/hreoc/stolen/prelim.html#copyright> (accessed June 25, 2008) Part 5, 19, 'Responses of Churches and other Non-Government Agencies.'

In terms of explicitly confessing wrong doing, the Australian Catholic Church accepted responsibility for the part it played in the Stolen Generations. In the lead up to the papal *purification of memory* liturgy, the Australian Catholic Bishops responded with a 'Statement of Repentance' written by Cardinal Clancy (President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference) and issued on behalf of the Bishops' Conference on March 7, 2000. The statement reads, in part: "Our efforts to assist Indigenous Australians have often been misguided and have led to unintended but harmful long-term consequences. For our faults and failings, for the hurt and scandal that they have caused both to groups and individuals, we profess sincere and profound regret in this year of jubilee and ask for forgiveness." Cardinal Clancy/Australian Catholic Bishops, "Statement of Repentance" *Origins* 29, no.40 (March 23, 2000): 655.

Pope John Paul II also officially recognised that the Catholic Church in Australia was complicit in the policy of the Stolen Generations and offered a confession: "The Church expresses deep regret and asks forgiveness where her children have been or still are party to these wrongs. Aware of the shameful injustices done to Indigenous peoples in Oceania, the Synod Fathers apologised unreservedly for the part played in these by members of the Church, especially where children were forcibly separated from their families." Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, para.76.

For a more detailed analysis of the Catholic Church's role in Aboriginal reconciliation see Dominic O'Sullivan's excellent article: "Pope John Paul II and Reconciliation as Mission." *Pacifica* 19, no.3 (October, 2006): 265-280.

Stolen Generations. Prime Minister Rudd stated: "For us, symbolism is important but, unless the great symbolism of reconciliation is accompanied by an even greater substance, it is little more than a clanging gong. It is not sentiment that makes history; it is our actions that make history."²⁰⁹ A lingering question is: what actions, if any, could possibly be regarded as true satisfaction for the policies of the Stolen Generations? Certainly a change of behaviour and policy on behalf of the law makers is one genuine response. But what kind of response can be provided directly to the Stolen Generation survivors? Speaking of the growing importance of political group apologies, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder comment on the importance attached to financial compensation as an effective tool for showing reparation for the misdeeds of the past when they write: "At the level of states and ethnic collectivities, money is exchanged for forgiveness. Money symbolises the irrevocable admission that a crime has been committed."²¹⁰

It is interesting to note that as yet in Australia no financial compensation for the survivors of the Stolen Generations policy has been forthcoming from the Federal Government. Furthermore, Prime Minister Rudd's speech makes no specific mention of reparations, financial or otherwise, for the Stolen Generations policy. Indeed, it could well be argued that the fear of having to pay financial compensation to the survivors of the Stolen Generations was one of the more salient reasons why an apology took so long in coming in the first place.²¹¹ Financial compensation remains one of the most effective

²⁰⁹ Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, House of Representatives, 2008.

²¹⁰ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, "Forgive and not Forget: Reconciliation Between Forgiveness and Resentment." in *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation*, ed. Elazar Barkan (California, USA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 93.

²¹¹ The effect that this lack of 'satisfaction' has had on the Indigenous population's sense of closure is summed up well by Cunneen and Libesman when they write: "For a Commonwealth government so keen to forget the past and move on, it is ironic that a refusal to consider compensation ensures that several thousand of the Stolen Generations throughout Australia will be with us for many years to come, demanding justice through the courts on an individual basis, reliving their personal trauma and constantly reminding

tools for illustrating the desire to make satisfaction for the wrongs of the past.²¹² It is worth noting here that following Australia's lead, the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper apologised in the Canadian Parliament on June 11, 2008 to the Aboriginal Indian communities of that country for the systemic government policy of assimilation, wide-spread sexual abuse and extreme cultural isolation experienced by Indigenous communities. What was different about Canada's national apology was that it included a determination from the Canadian Government to provide a C \$1.9 billion (A \$2 billion) in financial compensation to the roughly 90,000 victims.²¹³

Acts of satisfaction are effective tools for bringing a sense of closure to the survivors affected by the sin. In the Australian national apology, a meaningful satisfaction has still yet to be seen on the part of the Federal Government by providing financial compensation to the survivors of the Stolen Generations policy. The lack of a meaningful reparation for the crimes and misdemeanours of the past means that closure for many of the Indigenous survivors of the Stolen Generations policy is yet to occur.

3.3.4 *Absolution*

The opening of the 42nd Federal Parliament of Australia on February 12, 2008 was significant in that the time-honoured rituals of the British Westminster System were intermingled with the rituals of the Indigenous population for the very first time in Australian political history. In the Members Hall of the Federal Parliament the first ritual act performed, before the opening of the session of parliament, was in the form of an Aboriginal 'Welcome to

non-Aboriginal Australia of the effects of an overtly racist past." Cunneen and Libesman, "An Apology for Expressing Regret?" 152.

²¹² The *Bringing Them Home* Report recommended monetary compensation as one of the tools required for the reparation of the policies contributing to the Stolen Generations (*Bringing Them Home* Part 4, 14, note 5: Making Reparation).

²¹³ "We Failed Aboriginals: PM" *The West Australian* (Thursday, June 12, 2008): 35.

Country' ritual. This ceremony is customarily performed as the very first item on any agenda in acknowledgement of the traditional Indigenous ownership of the land.²¹⁴ In the opening of parliament, the Welcome to Country ceremony was conducted by the Ngambri people of the A.C.T., traditional owners of the land on which the Federal Parliament sits. The ceremony included songs, traditional dance and a Welcome to Country speech by Elder Matilda House Williams.²¹⁵

Before the Welcome to Country speech commenced, Matilda House Williams' granddaughters handed the Prime Minister a traditional gift of possum skin and a message stick. A gift of possum skin was also presented to the Opposition Leader, Dr Brendan Nelson and to the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, Harry Jenkins. The exchange of the message stick, in particular, is an extremely symbolic gesture in Aboriginal culture and ritual. These wooden sticks are marked with symbols and were to be shown to the elders of each group that the carriers, the young males, met on their

²¹⁴ Government of Western Australia, Department of Education and Training, Protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership (August, 2007) Website: <http://staffscreening.det.wa.edu.au/education/abled/docs/WelcomeToCountryAug2007.pdf> (accessed May, 2008). A Welcome to Country is where the traditional Aboriginal custodian or Elder welcomes people to their land. Welcome to country always occurs at the opening of an event and is usually the first item on the program. The local Aboriginal custodians or traditional owners conduct the ceremony and this may be done through a speech, song, ceremony or a combination of these things.

²¹⁵ Williams said: "A Prime Minister has honoured us, the first peoples of the land, the Ngambri people, by seeking a Welcome to Country. I stand here before you in this great institution of ceremonial dress, barefoot, honoured and welcome. A welcome to country acknowledges our people and pays respect to our ancestors' spirits who have created the lands. In doing this the Prime Minister shows what we call 'proper respect' to us, to his fellow parliamentarians and to all Australians. For thousands of years our people have observed this protocol. It is a good and honest and decent and very human act to reach out and make sure everyone has a place and is welcome. On behalf of the first people of this land, Prime Minister, I now return this honour." ABC News, *First Cut: Matilda House-Williams Offers Traditional Welcome to Country* (Tuesday, February 12, 2008) website: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/video/2008/02/12/2160412.htm> (accessed March, 2008).

journey. The bearer was then allowed to pass.²¹⁶ The symbolism of the stick entrusted to the Prime Minister the day before the apology speech was read in parliament, meant that his words of apology were now able to be recognised by the traditional owners of the land, he had now been given safe passage. For the Ngambri people, the message stick (highly symbolic in and of itself) is a strong, vibrant and appropriate symbol of reconciliation itself.²¹⁷

In his carefully worded speech, Prime Minister Rudd eloquently responded to the Indigenous welcome. He honoured the traditional owners of the land and thanked the Ngambri people for the gift of the message stick. He also committed future parliaments of Australia to opening with a Welcome to Country ceremony. However, feelings of resentment were obvious when the then Opposition Leader, Dr Brendan Nelson, gave his speech in parliament the following day, during which he said: "Our generation does not own these actions, nor should it feel guilt for what was done in many, but certainly not all cases, with the best intentions."²¹⁸ Many of the Indigenous population gathered outside Parliament House, watching the proceedings from inside the Great Hall, booed, jeered and turned their backs as Nelson spoke. One Indigenous woman was quoted after Nelson's speech saying: "I thought he was discriminating against our people and he wasn't giving any sunlight in this moment of healing and it was a degrading matter that he was

²¹⁶ Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Social Justice Sunday Statement 2006, *The Heart of our Country: Dignity and Justice for our Indigenous Sisters and Brothers*. (Lindwall and Ward, 2006), 3.

²¹⁷ Matilda House commented: "The message stick is a means of communication used by our people for thousands of years that tell the story of our coming together. The hope of a united nation through reconciliation, we can join together the people of the oldest living culture in the world and with others, who have come from all over the globe and who continue to come. With this renewed, our hope and our pride, our strength are refreshed." ABC News, *First Cut*, 2008.

²¹⁸ Liberal Party of Australia. *We are Sorry – Address to Parliament*. The Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson. Website: http://www.liberal.org.au/info/news/detail/20080213_WearesorryAddresstoParliament.php (accessed June, 2008).

going on about.”²¹⁹ These acts of defiance from the Indigenous population, albeit completely understandable, detracted from the atmosphere of forgiveness and reconciliation in the speeches and ceremonies that had preceded Nelson’s speech.

Expressions of forgiveness from the survivors of the Stolen Generations themselves are more powerful.²²⁰ For Nanna Fejo, reconciliation is a reality that she already lives. For other survivors of the Stolen Generations however, such as those who now fight for compensation, reconciliation is still far off on the distant horizon. In the dynamics of the apology to the Stolen Generations, it seems easier to ascertain forgiveness in the individual sense than it is in the corporate sense. The concept of group forgiveness cannot be presumed here. Whilst it is certainly significant that a Welcome to Country ceremony has occurred for the first time in the history of the Australian Parliament, and that a message stick was presented to the Prime Minister, these rituals do not in themselves indicate that forgiveness and therefore reconciliation has occurred on the group or national level. At best we can say that forgiveness has occurred within the Ngambri people, as the Welcome to Country ceremony was conducted by this tribal group. But what of the Ngunnawal, Walgalu, Wiradjuri, Yuin, Gundungarra, Ngarigo,

²¹⁹ “Fury Over Nelson’s ‘Sorry’ Response,” *The Age* (February, 13, 2008) Website: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/fury-over-nelsons-sorry-reply/2008/02/13/1202760367682.html?page=2> (accessed June, 2008).

²²⁰ Take for example the story of Nanna Fejo, one of the survivors of the Stolen Generations cited earlier. Her story is certainly one of forgiveness, as Prime Minister Rudd alluded to in his apology speech: “I asked Nanna Fejo what she would have me say today about her story. As I left, later on, Nanna Fejo took one of my staff aside, wanting to make sure that I was not too hard on the Aboriginal stockman who had hunted those kids down all those years ago. The stockman had found her again decades later, this time himself to say, ‘Sorry.’ And remarkably, extraordinarily, she had forgiven him.” Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, House of Representatives, 2008.

Noongar, Eora, Jagera, Waradjeri, Gurrinji or countless other tribal groups that represent the totality of Indigenous Australia?²²¹

A national apology has now been offered in the hope that forgiveness and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians may occur, but this reconciliation has not yet been fully realised. Australia is on the road to national reconciliation, although it has not yet arrived at the final destination.

3.4 Case-Study 3: The Papal Apology to Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse

The use of ritual in a contemporary group apology for social sin is also evident in the apology made by Pope Benedict XVI to the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. This ground-breaking apology occurred on July 19, 2008 in St Mary's Cathedral Sydney, during a Mass for the dedication of a new high altar. Pope Benedict was in Sydney for the proceedings of World Youth Day 2008 and used this Mass as a vehicle for offering a public apology to representatives of the survivors of clergy sexual abuse in Australia. Present during the Mass was the leading prelate of the Catholic Church in Australia, Cardinal and Archbishop of Sydney George Pell, along with many other Australian clergy.

3.4.1 *Contrition*

The blight of clergy sexual abuse in Australia is a topical example of structural social sin. Due to unsatisfactory processes for dealing with sexual abuse, Catholic Church authorities in Australia and overseas have sometimes been guilty of mismanaging the blight of clerical sexual abuse. This institutional mismanagement has sometimes even covered up the

²²¹ See Norman B. Tindale's "Catalogue of Australian Aboriginal Tribes" catalogues hundreds of tribal groups in his 1974 book, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits and Proper Names*. Website: <http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/orig/tindale/tindaletribes/about.htm> (accessed June, 2008).

scandal, protecting the clerics responsible for sexual abuse and in some cases moving them to new parishes. This sometimes had the damaging effect of making the sexual abuse far worse. Joe Grayland succinctly identifies the socially sinful aspects of clergy sexual abuse: “Two aspects that appear to gall the most are the shroud of secrecy that is drawn over the situation, because it appears to favour the perpetrator, and secondly, inexcusable decisions that have seen priests and religious moved from one parish to another, creating as a result a history of abuse.”²²²

Pope John Paul II addressed a letter to the U.S. Bishops on June 11, 1993 outlining his call for prayer and repentance (*metanoia*).²²³ In this letter, the Pope acknowledged the fault of Church institutions (i.e. the structural deficiencies) in the cover-up of sexual abuse:

I fully share your sorrow and your concern, especially your concern for the victims so seriously hurt by these misdeeds. The words of Christ about scandal apply also to all those persons and institutions, often anonymous, that through sensationalism in various ways open the door to evil in the conscience and behaviour of vast sectors of society, especially among the young who are particularly vulnerable.²²⁴

The U.S. Bishops’ pastoral response came on October 26, 1995 in the document *Walk in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse*.²²⁵ In part the letter reads:

We are compelled to speak even knowing that the Church carries a heavy burden of responsibility in the area of sexual abuse. Some ordained ministers and religious brothers and sisters, as well as lay employees and volunteers, have sexually abused children and

²²² Joe Grayland, “The Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation,” 154.

²²³ See *Origins* 23, no.7 (July 1, 1993): 102-103.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 25, no.20 (November 2, 1995): 338-343.

adolescents. We are acutely aware of the havoc and suffering caused by this abuse, and we are committed to dealing with these situations responsibly and in all humility.²²⁶

The Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Bernard Law, resigned on December 13, 2002 amidst controversy of structural silence and hierarchical mismanagement of systemic clergy sexual abuse of minors in his diocese.²²⁷ Interestingly, the call for Cardinal Law's resignation came from amongst his own clergy in the Archdiocese of Boston.²²⁸ In the lead-up to World Youth Day 2008, Pope Benedict XVI visited the U.S. from April 15-20, 2008. During this visit, Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church at several different venues. For example, in his Washington address to the US Bishops, Pope Benedict stated:

Among the countersigns to the Gospel of life found in America and elsewhere is one that causes deep shame: the sexual abuse of minors. It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation and to reach out with loving concern to those seriously wronged.²²⁹

Pope Benedict XVI also admitted the failure of the Church to respond adequately to cases of clergy sexual abuse (and hence also the structurally sinful elements) when he frankly stated that: "Responding to this situation has not been easy and it was sometimes very badly handled."²³⁰ In the

²²⁶ Ibid., 339.

²²⁷ Ibid., 32, no. 29 (January 2, 2003): 473-476.

²²⁸ A letter sent to Cardinal Law was written on behalf of 58 archdiocesan and religious order priests in the Archdiocese of Boston. The letter read in part: "It is with a heavy heart that we write to you to request your resignation as Archbishop of Boston. While this is obviously a difficult request, we believe in our hearts that this is a necessary step that must be taken if healing is to come to the archdiocese. The priests and people of Boston have lost confidence in you as their spiritual leader." Ibid., 475-476.

²²⁹ Ibid., no.46 (May 1, 2008): 733.

²³⁰ Ibid., 733.

Jubilee Year 2000 the Australian Catholic Church produced the document *Towards Healing* to provide procedures for responding to cases of sexual abuse committed by personnel of the Catholic Church.²³¹ The Introduction to this document reads: “As bishops and leaders of religious institutes of the Catholic Church in Australia, we acknowledge with deep sadness and regret that a number of clergy and religious have abused children, adolescents and adults who have been in their pastoral care. To these victims we offer our sincere apology.”²³²

Sincere expressions of contrition (*metanoia*) like those cited above illustrate a real desire of Church authorities to eradicate the culture of structural silence, mismanagement and cover-up of sexual abuse, to the very highest echelons of the Catholic Church.

3.4.2 Confession

In the immediate lead up to the World Youth Day celebrations in Sydney 2008, the anger of the local community flared up as Cardinal Pell of Sydney was implicated in (though subsequently vindicated of) a scandal regarding sexual abuse (and its alleged cover-up) in the Catholic Church. Matters were not helped by the response of Bishop Anthony Fisher, an auxiliary bishop of the Sydney Archdiocese and the official spokesman for the World Youth Day events, who, when questioned about clergy abuse, criticised people for “dwelling crankily on old wounds.”²³³ It was within this pastoral context that Pope Benedict XVI finally offered a full public apology for clergy sexual

²³¹ Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures in Responding to Complaints of Abuse Against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*, rev. ed. (Centre State Printing: December, 2000). This policy document is now used by almost every diocese in Australia, with the exception of the Melbourne Archdiocese and the Society of Jesus which have implemented their own policy procedures in relation to clerical and religious sexual abuse.

²³² *Ibid.*, 1.

²³³ “Outrage as Bishop Tells Abuse Victims to Move On.” *The West Australian* (Thursday, July 17, 2008): 5.

abuse in Australia. This papal confession represents a continuation of the papal apology offered by Pope John Paul II in the *purification of memory* liturgy of March 12, 2000 which lacked any specific reference to the blight of clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI stated during his homily for the Mass:

I would like to pause to acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious in this country. Indeed, I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured and I assure them that as their pastor, I too share in their suffering. These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain; they have damaged the Church's witness. Victims should receive compassion and care, and those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice.²³⁴

During his visit to Sydney for World Youth Day 2008, and in the immediate lead-up to his apology to the survivors of clergy sexual abuse, Pope Benedict XVI also made an explicit reference to the national secular apology to the Stolen Generations and its positive effects on the promotion of reconciliation, both in Australia and around the world. Pope Benedict XVI stated: "This example of reconciliation offers hope to peoples all over the world who long to see their rights affirmed and their contribution to society acknowledged and promoted."²³⁵ This papal recognition of a secular apology for social sin acknowledges the significance of secular rituals in promotion of forgiveness and reconciliation. These rituals must be allowed to continue to inform and enrich the penitential practice of the Catholic Church if its own rituals of reconciliation are to be celebrated and experienced meaningfully in the contemporary world.

²³⁴ "Pope's Sorry for Clergy Sex Abuse." *The Sunday Times* (July 20, 2008): 8.

²³⁵ "Pope Warns of Moral Confusion." *The West Australian* (Friday, July 18, 2008): 9.

3.4.3 *Act of Penance (Satisfaction)*

The papal apology of March 12, 2000 seems to have increased the eagerness of individual dioceses in Australia and indeed around the world to make genuine attempts to right the wrongs of the past. Many dioceses in Australia, and elsewhere, have now begun to provide financial compensation for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Financial compensation remains one avenue where acts of penance (satisfaction) for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse are appropriate.²³⁶ However, it must also be acknowledged that in some cases survivors are not necessarily looking for financial compensation as much as an apology from Church officials and a continuation of the healing and reconciliation process. In Chapter 4 it will be suggested that this process can be greatly assisted by the use of appropriate liturgical rites, such as the Penitential Celebration.

The sin of clergy sexual abuse and the hierarchical cover-up of its occurrence is one example where the community itself is often damaged as a result of the sin which has occurred (often unnoticed) in its midst. The current sacramental Rites of Reconciliation do not adequately address the long-term communal effects of this kind of social sin, nor do they provide ritual avenues of forgiveness and reconciliation for whole communities over and above the individuals that comprise that community and whose sins have harmed the community as a whole. Citing the example of clergy sexual

²³⁶ The law firm 'In Good Faith & Associates' has successfully represented survivors of sexual abuse in Victoria. They describe the importance of receiving of financial compensation from the Church in the following terms: "Also very important, financial restitution (compensation) is requested and negotiated on behalf of the victim in these processes, to a just and fair level. Financial restitution is a powerful message that the Church body wishes to support the victim's journey towards restoration and that experiences of hope may come with future life opportunities and changes. In practice we aim for monetary restitution to facilitate a better way forward for the victim, whilst adequately addressing the serious effects of the past abuse." Law Firm 'In Good Faith & Associates' Website: http://www.igfa.com.au/images/pdfs/Pastoral_Advocacy.pdf (accessed July, 2008).

abuse, Grayland suggests that the penitential practice of the Catholic Church has maintained a private confessional culture over the need for proper and authentic forms of restitution for grave public and social sin.²³⁷ Grayland argues further that the Church must look for new ways to build on the current sacramental focus for the satisfaction of sin that is largely private and confession based, to rites that emphasise the responsibility for genuine and sincere acts of penance (restitution) in the process of public healing for the forgiveness of social sin.²³⁸

3.4.4 *Absolution*

Despite the papal apology and gestures of contrition offered by Pope Benedict XVI, many Australian survivors of clergy sexual abuse are still unable or unwilling to forgive. At the end of the World Youth Day 2008 proceedings, Pope Benedict XVI held unscheduled conversations and celebrated a private Mass with two men and two women who were survivors of clergy abuse.²³⁹ A statement from the Vatican read: "Through this paternal gesture, the Holy Father wished to demonstrate again his deep

²³⁷ Grayland writes: "The issue here, however, is not that of child abuse, but rather why we, as Church, so inadequately deal with serious public sin, seem unconcerned to work in restorative ways with the victims and society at large and comfortably exclude the ecclesial gathering from our praxis of sacramental reconciliation. I would suggest that the present rites' critically underdeveloped theology of sacramental restitution is due in part to its overdeveloped emphasis on the individual penitent's private confession of sin and their immediate absolution, effectively limits our understanding of restitution. An absolution is given before penance or restitution is made, with the penitent's intention to reform as the only prerequisite for absolution, tends to make restitution or penance secondary to the fact." Joe Grayland, "The Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation," 155-157.

²³⁸ Grayland suggests: "The language we use surrounding sacramental reconciliation and its praxis must embrace the language and theology of social sin in order to be more adequate in bringing healing and naming sin. If the present structure and understanding of sacramental reconciliation is perceived as maintaining sinful systems, institutions and structures, as suggested by journalists and others, then the way in which we deal with sin sacramentally and liturgically must also be called into question." *Ibid.*, 166.

²³⁹ See *Origins* 37, no.46 (May 1, 2008): 764. This visit echoed a similar unscheduled papal meeting with survivors of clergy sexual abuse in the USA in April, 2008.

concern for all those who have suffered sexual abuse.”²⁴⁰ Many however were critical of the Mass as an empty gesture and critical of those survivors who were very carefully chosen to meet with the Pope personally.²⁴¹

While Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to Sydney in July 2008 for the World Youth Day celebrations was enormously successful, his apology for the blight of clergy sexual abuse in Australia (although sorely needed) has brought to the surface many hurts and wounds still present among the survivors and families of clergy sexual abuse. These hurts and wounds require both pastoral and liturgical attention if the much needed process of healing and reconciliation in the Australian Catholic Church is to be advanced. The papal confession for clergy sexual abuse in Australia represents another watershed moment in the recognition of social sin in the penitential practice of the Catholic Church. Like Pope John Paul II before him, Pope Benedict XVI has now authoritatively set the course for a new future direction for the Catholic Church in Australia as it attempts to continue to deal with social sin and the need to care for the many survivors of clergy sexual abuse.²⁴²

3.5 Summary

The ritual element of contrition (*metanoia*) is a strong aspect of all three group apologies as illustrated above. All three apologies reveal a form of contrition

²⁴⁰ “Pope Meets Child Sex Abuse Victims” AAP Website: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/latest/4810568/pope-meets-child-sex-abuse-victims> (accessed July, 2008).

²⁴¹ Broken Rites is a support group for survivors of sexual abuse. Broken Rites president Chris MacIsaac said: “The Church has clearly known about this for some time, and we wrote to the Church months ago asking that a representative of Broken Rites be allowed to meet the Pope. The majority of broken rites victims would never approach the Church because they have no trust of it. That would have been very symbolic if one of the victims could have come out today and share what they’d been through, but they (the Church) picked victims that wouldn’t speak.” “Critics Unsatisfied by Papal Meeting,” *The Australian* (Tuesday, July 22, 2008): 5.

²⁴² This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

that has been sincerely and collectively expressed. However they also reveal that this heart-felt contrition was not always sincerely felt on a subjective level. Contrition is a necessary first step in moving a community to the point where forgiveness and reconciliation can occur. Just how or whether collective contrition in rituals of forgiveness for social sin which convey genuine sincerity can be established, is always a real concern.

The ritual element of confession is another strong aspect of all three apologies. All three leaders: Pope John Paul II, Prime Minister Rudd and Pope Benedict XVI were bold enough to apologise publicly for social sin(s) despite resistance from within their own ranks. In rituals of forgiveness for social sin it is necessary for the confessional element to be as targeted and specific as possible if group confessions are to be received more favourably by those to whom the confession is addressed.

The presence of recognisable and sincere acts of penance (satisfaction) is lacking in all three apologies. As the effects of social sin affect large numbers of people, genuine attempts to make right the wrongs of the past through compensatory measures (however necessary) are not the only measure to the overall effectiveness of the group apology. Grayland's suggestion that a new penitential culture in the Catholic Church which takes seriously the need for genuine and lasting acts of penance must be built, which has the ability to transform those institutional structures which have created and supported socially sinful ways of behaving, merits closer attention. All three apologies illustrate that if a group apology is to be successful, it must be much more than just a collection of words and symbols. Unfortunately, all three apologies are inadequate when judged against the need for genuine acts of penance.

The ritual element of absolution is discernible but by no measure convincing in any of the three case-studies illustrated. Although contrition may be expressed publicly in the hope that forgiveness will result, this can never be assumed. A group apology may be offered on behalf of those who may have committed the social sin(s), but what is problematic is whether or not the apology has been favourably received. Ultimately, the overall effectiveness of a group apology is measured by its ability to foster a meaningful and lasting reconciliation. The beginnings of the process of community reconciliation has commenced as a result of these group apologies.

The ritual performance of all four elements comprising the Sacrament of Penance cannot be discerned definitively in any of the three case-studies illustrated. Therefore the possibility for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin within the current *sacramental* rites of the Catholic Church is problematic. Chapter 4 will examine the *non-sacramental* Penitential Celebration as an alternative ritual arena in which the challenge of finding a suitable medium for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin may be met.

CHAPTER 4

The Penitential Celebration

The Penitential Celebration is a non-sacramental rite housing great potential for effecting healing for social sin. The RP defines Penitential Celebrations as: “Gatherings of people to hear the proclamation of God’s Word. This invites them to conversion and renewal of life and announces our freedom from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ.”²⁴³ The birth of the PC as a mainstream liturgical rite came with the promulgation of the new *Ordo Paenitentiae* in December 1973. However, Daniel Grigassy notes that even before the promulgation of the new *Rite of Penance*, so-called ‘Penitential Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest’ were already occurring in some Churches, although they were not wide-spread.²⁴⁴ These celebrations were para-liturgical bible services that came out of the biblical renewal which occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, as the Catholic Church rediscovered the importance and the centrality of the Word of God in its liturgical celebrations.²⁴⁵ The format of these bible services served as the ritual framework for the development of the Penitential Celebration. Grigassy explains:

The ritual format of preconciliar bible services, as well as the structure of similar services prior to the promulgation of the new *Ordo*, were then transferred to the Penitential Celebrations of Appendix II, which were essentially para-liturgical bible services drawing out themes of penitence and reconciliation.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.36, 15.

²⁴⁴ See Grigassy, “Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation,” 14.

²⁴⁵ See Pope Pius XII’s Encyclical Letter, “*Divino Afflante Spiritu*” *On Biblical Studies and Opportune Means of Promoting Them*. (Catholic Truth Society, 1956). This Encyclical was an important catalyst for the crucial rediscovery of the importance of the Word of God in the liturgical celebrations of the Church.

²⁴⁶ Grigassy, “Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation,” 14.

4.1 Ritual Structure

The Penitential Celebration is an underdeveloped liturgical rite with enormous potential for acknowledging social sin in a formal Catholic ritual context. Chapter 3 showed that there are four specific ritual elements that are integral to the *sacramental* performance of the Rite of Penance (i.e. contrition, confession, acts of penance and absolution). While three of these ritual elements are present to a greater or lesser degree in the PC (i.e. contrition, confession²⁴⁷ and acts of penance), it lacks the ritual element of absolution.²⁴⁸ The *Rite of Penance* is careful to warn that “care should be taken that the faithful do not confuse these celebrations with the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.”²⁴⁹ The RP reinforces this warning by outlining PC’s in Part V, only after the three sacramental rites of Reconciliation are listed.²⁵⁰ These warnings underscore the *non-sacramental* nature of the PC.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, the PC represents an effective (albeit non-sacramental) complement to the three existing sacramental rites housing the potential to act as an appropriate locale for the liturgical recognition of social sin.

Appendix II of the RP includes 9 sample PC’s for liturgical use: Lent 1 and 2, Advent, Sin and Conversion, The Son Returns to the Father, The Beatitudes, Children, Young People and The Sick.²⁵² Although there is a ritual structure

²⁴⁷ Exomologesis is properly translated as “confession.” In the RP however it means the profession of God’s glory as forgiving saviour. This stands in a certain tension with the popular understanding of confession as “confession of sins.”

²⁴⁸ Absolution in this sense is taken to mean sacramental absolution. This does not mean to say that a non-sacramental absolution is ruled out in the PC, as this dissertation will argue.

²⁴⁹ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.37, 16 and para.1, 119.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, para.36-37, 15-16.

²⁵¹ Grigassy is careful to note that nowhere does the *Rite of Penance* explicitly call PC’s ‘non-sacramental.’ He writes: “The *Ordo Paenitentiae* issued in December 1973 by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship wisely avoids the infelicitous term non-sacramental.” Grigassy, “Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation,” 12.

²⁵² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, Appendix II, para.1-73, 119-144.

Table 4.1 Ritual Structure of Penitential Celebrations

Sample Penitential Celebrations (Appendix II of the RP)

Ritual Elements of the PC	LENT 1	LENT 2	ADVENT	SIN & CONVERSION	SON RETURNS to the FATHER	THE BEATITUDES	CHILDREN	YOUNG PEOPLE	THE SICK
INTRODUCTORY RITES									
Opening Hymn	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greeting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Explanation of Theme	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opening Prayer	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
LITURGY OF THE WORD									
First Reading	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	X	X
Responsorial Psalm/Hymn	X	X	X	X	X	X	--	--	X
Second Reading	--	X	X	X	--	--	--	--	--
Gospel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Homily	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RITE OF REPENTANCE AND CONTRITION									
Examination of Conscience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Act of Repentance: <i>Confiteor</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Blessing/Sprinkling of Water</i>	--	x	x	---	---	--	--	x	x
<i>Intercessions</i>	x	--	--	---	---	--	--	--	--
<i>Lord's Prayer</i>	--	--	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lord's Prayer	--	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Embolism	--	X	--	---	---	--	--	--	--
Act of Contrition	--	--	--	---	---	--	X	--	--
Prayer of Thanksgiving	--	--	--	---	---	--	--	--	X
Final Prayer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CONCLUDING RITES									
Blessing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dismissal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Closing Hymn	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

common to all PC's, there are ritual elements present in some PC's that are not present in others. Table 4.1 represents diagrammatically the ritual structure of these sample PC's.

4.2 Ritual Analysis of Sample Penitential Celebrations

An analysis of the ritual elements of the 9 sample PC's as outlined in Appendix II of the RP (see left hand column in Table 4.1), will offer some clarification as to why PC's provide such an appropriate setting in which to address and deal with the problem of social sin in the Church.²⁵³

4.2.1 Introductory Rites

The introductory rites of the PC consist of: opening hymn, greeting, explanation of the theme of the celebration and opening prayer (see Table 4.1). These introductory rites show a close ritual resemblance to those found in the celebration of the Mass, but omit the Penitential Rite and the Gloria. In May 2007, a new interim text of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) for Australia was promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.²⁵⁴ The GIRM (2007) defines the purpose of the Introductory Rites as: a beginning, an introduction to the liturgy, as well as a preparation for the faithful to dispose themselves to listen properly to God's Word.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ As Catholic Church documents do not as yet devote substantial attention to the ritual elements of the PC as a non-sacramental liturgical rite (except in a very simplified form in the RP), the necessary rubrical explanations of the PC in this analysis are drawn mainly from the available instructions for the Mass: The Sacramentary, the Lectionary for Mass and the GIRM (2007) and from the *Rite of Penance* in general. Much of what is stated about the ritual elements of the sacraments of the Mass and Penance are applicable directly to PC's.

²⁵⁴ The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Interim text for Australia* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, May 2007).

²⁵⁵ GIRM (2007) para.46, 30.

4.2.1.1 *Opening Hymn*

Singing was a key aspect of early Church liturgical practice. St Paul urged his communities to sing together psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.²⁵⁶ An ancient proverb suggests that to sing well is to pray twice.²⁵⁷ As the Christian Church began to flourish, hymns formed an integral part of the often large procession of ministers into Church buildings.²⁵⁸ The GIRM (2007) states that the opening hymn is used to: “open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical season or festivity and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers.”²⁵⁹ Music is something that by its very nature is done socially. Stephen Dean comments: “This has theological importance: to sing together people need to be present to and conscious of each other and strive to raise a single song to God.”²⁶⁰

A well chosen hymn that suits the nature of the chosen sample PC is vitally important in helping to set the correct penitential atmosphere, whilst also reminding the assembly of the celebratory nature of the liturgy (namely the freedom won through the paschal mystery of Christ). Accordingly, the RP suggests the use of an entrance hymn in all recommended sample PC's outlined in Appendix II (see Table 4.1).

²⁵⁶ Cf. Colossians 3:16.

²⁵⁷ Quoted in GIRM (2007), para.39, 26.

²⁵⁸ Johnson notes: “The precise period when this solemn entrance developed is not known; it is attested for the papal Mass shortly after 701 A.D.” Lawrence J. Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of the Mass*. rev. ed. (Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 2003), 3.

²⁵⁹ GIRM (2007), para.47, 30.

²⁶⁰ Stephen Dean, ed., *Celebration: The Liturgy Handbook*. (New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 121.

4.2.1.2 *Greeting/Explanation of Theme*

The greeting and explanation of the theme of the PC also resemble those given in the Mass. The greeting begins with the sign of the cross,²⁶¹ followed by the traditional greeting: “The Lord be with you.”²⁶² The GIRM (2007) explains the ecclesiological meaning for the greeting: “By this greeting and the people’s response, the mystery of the Church gathered together is made manifest.”²⁶³ Johnson reminds us, the greeting is both an affirmation of the presence of Christ in the gathered assembly as well as a prayer that the community actually experiences this powerful presence.²⁶⁴ The RP suggests several forms of greeting in Rite 2 that can be used in PC’s.²⁶⁵ Alternatively, the RP suggests that the greetings used in the introductory rites of the Mass can be used.²⁶⁶

The explanation of the theme of the PC is important as it allows the assembly to focus their minds and hearts on the central meaning of the liturgy, which will be reinforced in the liturgy of the word. The introduction should be kept as brief as possible because it is not meant to be a mini-homily and any unnecessary commentary only serves to confuse the sacred with the profane.²⁶⁷ The explanation of the theme allows the presiding minister to address the particular group of people present in the PC (e.g. young people,

²⁶¹Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 10. Johnson traces the beginnings of the sign of the cross in early Christian liturgical usage as early as the second century CE, with its more widespread usage in the celebration of the sacraments appearing by the late fourth century.

²⁶² The Order of the Mass provides two additional greetings taken from the letters of St Paul. The first is: “The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (Cf. 2 Corinthians 13:13) The second is: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.” (Cf. Galatians 1:3) The people’s response to the greeting is: “and also with you.” The Roman Missal, *The Sacramentary*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1985), 403.

²⁶³ GIRM (2007), para.49, 31.

²⁶⁴ See Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 11.

²⁶⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.49, 28-29.

²⁶⁶ The Roman Missal, *The Sacramentary*, 403.

²⁶⁷ See GIRM (2007) para.49, 31.

children, the sick, etc.). As such, an explanation of the theme of the PC is of vital importance and is present in all PC's offered in Appendix II of the RP (see Table 4.1).

4.2.1.3 *Opening Prayer*

The origins of the opening prayer in Roman liturgies date back at least to the middle of the fifth century CE.²⁶⁸ This ancient form of prayer is also known as the 'collect' as its purpose is to unite (collect) and direct the prayers of the gathered assembly to God. Michael Kunzler writes: "The collect is the first of the presidential prayers which the priest, in whom Christ himself presides over the assembly, directs to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present."²⁶⁹ The opening prayer in the PC follows the same basic pattern as the opening prayer of the Mass: an address, a petition and a conclusion. In accordance with ancient tradition, the collect is usually addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit and is concluded with a Trinitarian invocation.²⁷⁰ The faithful give their response to the sentiments expressed in the collect and make it their own with the response, "Amen."²⁷¹ However, not all of the opening prayers in the sample PC's follow this basic pattern. Two PC's (Lent 1, Sin and Conversion) have opening prayers specifically addressed to Jesus Christ. This serves to differentiate these two PC's from the others, because they are focussed on the person of Jesus Christ and on particular aspects of his public ministry.

Interestingly, the PC for Children omits the opening prayer altogether in pastoral response to the ages of those gathered for the celebration, replacing it with an extended commentary on the Gospel reading. However, this does

²⁶⁸ See Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 20.

²⁶⁹ Michael Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*. (New York: Continuum, 1995), 201.

²⁷⁰ See GIRM (2007) para.54, 32-33.

²⁷¹ See CCC, para.2856, 687. Amen can be translated as: "Let it be so," or "So be it."

not detract from the importance of the opening prayer which appears in every other sample PC (see Table 4.1).

4.2.2 Liturgy of the Word

The liturgy of the word in the PC typically consists of: first reading, responsorial psalm/hymn, second reading, gospel and homily (see Table 4.1). The GIRM (2007) explains the purpose of the liturgy of the word: “For in the readings, as expounded in the homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering them spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present in the midst of the faithful through his word.”²⁷² The liturgy of the word is extremely ancient in its origin, Justin Martyr (circa 150 CE) writes of liturgical readings from the “memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets.”²⁷³ As the origins of the PC are firmly rooted in the celebration of para-liturgical bible services, the liturgy of the word forms a central role in the ritual structure of all PC’s (see Table 4.1). This is why this liturgical rite is suitably called a *Penitential Celebration*, because the liturgy of the word in the PC is centred on recalling and celebrating the freedom from sin that has already been obtained for us from God through the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, i.e. his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection from the dead.

Interestingly, the PC also makes allowance for certain non-scriptural readings to be included before or after the readings from scripture.²⁷⁴ Readings from the early Church Fathers or other appropriate writers are suggested in order to: “help the community and each person to a true awareness of sin and heartfelt sorrow.”²⁷⁵ As social sin is a contemporary theological concept, appropriate non-scriptural readings could be used

²⁷² GIRM (2007) para.55, 33.

²⁷³ CCC, para.1345, 339.

²⁷⁴ See The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.36, 16.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

effectively to enhance meditations on the nature of social sin in the liturgy of the word.²⁷⁶

4.2.2.1 *First Reading/Responsorial Psalm/Second Reading*

In the celebration of the Sunday Mass it is customary to have a first reading from the Old Testament, the responsorial psalm, and a second reading from the New Testament. As the Lectionary for Mass states: “This arrangement brings out the unity of the Old and New Testaments and of the history of salvation, in which Christ is the central figure, commemorated in his paschal mystery.”²⁷⁷ PC’s can have first and second readings or a first reading only (see Table 4.1). In the PC’s with only one reading (Lent 2, Advent, Sin and Conversion) the suggested reading is taken from the New Testament as it more clearly articulates the paschal mystery of Christ. However, in PC’s where two readings are offered, an Old Testament – New Testament reading pattern is used. The responsorial psalm serves to foster meditation on the word of God.²⁷⁸ Where prayerful meditation is not appropriate (e.g. for reasons of age) the psalm can be replaced with an appropriate hymn.²⁷⁹ However, the majority of the sample PC’s do include a responsorial psalm (see Table 4.1) in order to assist in reflection on the word of God, which ideally should be sung or else recited in such a way to foster meditation.²⁸⁰ The suggested choice of texts given in each PC should not be altered without good pastoral reason.²⁸¹ If a change in text is necessary, the RP provides a list

²⁷⁶ For example, appropriate excerpts taken from R et P could assist in prayerful meditation.

²⁷⁷ Lectionary for Mass in *The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource*. vol.1. Fourth ed. (Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 137.

²⁷⁸ GIRM (2007) para.61, 35.

²⁷⁹ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.55(a), 138. For example, in the PC for Young People a hymn based on psalm 40 is suggested.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ See Lectionary for Mass, para.78, 140-141.

of other suitable biblical readings.²⁸² The use of the first and second readings and responsorial psalm serve as a prelude to the proclamation of the gospel.

4.2.2.2 *Gospel/Homily*

As in the Mass, the New Testament gospels represent the high point of the liturgy of the word in the PC as they record the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.²⁸³ For this reason the gospels are introduced with the acclamation 'Alleluia' (Praise the Lord) and often with a procession.²⁸⁴ The special place of the gospels is enhanced further by its proclamation by an ordained minister.²⁸⁵ Reflecting the importance of the gospel, each sample PC includes a set gospel text. Once again, if another gospel is needed for pastoral reasons, the RP provides other appropriate texts.²⁸⁶ The homily follows the proclamation of the gospel and is recommended in each sample PC, thus highlighting its importance (see Table 4.1). The GIRM (2007) states that a homily is necessary "for the nurturing of the Christian life . . . and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners."²⁸⁷

In order to help the celebrant to do this, the RP provides homily notes in each sample PC, focussing on several aspects of the suggested gospel text that need to be elaborated further in the context of the celebration. Homily suggestions are more detailed in some sample PC's (e.g. Lent 1 and 2) than in others (e.g. Advent, Children). There is considerable flexibility available to the celebrant in terms of choice of themes to be drawn out in the homily in

²⁸² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.101-175, 42-96.

²⁸³ See Lectionary for Mass, para.36, 131.

²⁸⁴ GIRM (2007) para.62, 36.

²⁸⁵ Johnson comments: "Whereas the other readings could be proclaimed by any lector, a special minister was appointed to read the Gospel. Traditionally this was the deacon who was considered the special exemplar of Christ the servant. Only in the absence of a deacon did a priest proclaim the Gospel." Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 41.

²⁸⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.176-201, 96-111.

²⁸⁷ GIRM (2007), para.65, 36-37.

order to cater to the diverse range of life and faith experiences in the gathered assembly in light of the particular theme of the PC.

4.2.3 Rites of Contrition and Repentance

The rites of contrition and repentance in the PC consist of: examination of conscience, act of repentance, act of contrition, Lord's Prayer, prayer of thanksgiving and final prayer. Up until this point, the ritual structure of the PC closely resembles the ritual structure of the Second Rite of Reconciliation in the RP.²⁸⁸ The rites of contrition and repentance in PC's however, represent a significant point of departure from Rite 2. These rites flow naturally in theme and tone from those already enumerated in the preceding rites, particularly in terms of the themes enumerated in the liturgy of the word, and they lead towards the ritual expression of contrition and repentance. The RP states that: "Penitential Celebrations are beneficial in fostering the spirit and virtue of penance among individuals and communities."²⁸⁹ The rites of contrition and repentance included in every PC certainly assist in achieving this aim (see Table 4.1).

4.2.3.1 Examination of Conscience

The examination of conscience appears in all sample PC's outlined in the RP (see Table 4.1). In Rite 2 celebrations of Penance, the purpose of the examination of conscience is to help to prepare the penitent for the Rite of Reconciliation (the high point of the sacramental liturgy). In the PC this rite is designed to help to prepare the penitent for the liturgical expression of contrition in the act of repentance (the high point of the rites of contrition and repentance). The RP describes the purpose of the examination of

²⁸⁸ The RP states: "The ritual structure of these services is the same as that usually followed in celebrations of the Word of God and given in the Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents. The Roman Ritual, *The Rite of Penance*, para.36, 15-16.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, para.1, 119.

conscience: "A period of time may be spent in making an examination of conscience and in arousing true sorrow for sins. The priest, deacon, or another minister may help the faithful by brief statements or a kind of litany, taking into consideration their circumstances, age, etc."²⁹⁰ The RP directs the reader to Appendix III for a sample outline of the examination of conscience, which the RP suggests should be completed and adapted to meet different pastoral needs.²⁹¹ In PC's for the sick, an additional examination of conscience specifically tailored to their pastoral needs is suggested.²⁹² The RP also recommends the use of silence in the examination of conscience to allow the individual penitent to examine their own conscience. The role of silence in the liturgical celebration of the PC should never be underestimated. The GIRM (2007) states: "Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times . . . so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting matter."²⁹³ Though the examination of conscience is a central part of the PC, there is considerable pastoral freedom in the way it can be executed to meet specific pastoral needs and the theme of the particular celebration.

4.2.3.2 *Act of Repentance*

In the Tridentine rite,²⁹⁴ the Confiteor (a traditional prayer of contrition) was said in private by the priest at the foot of the altar prior to the commencement of the Mass and was not part of the official ritual of the

²⁹⁰Ibid., para.53, 31.

²⁹¹ Ibid., para1, 145. For example, in PC's for children the examination of conscience would need to be simplified, as suggested by the rite.

²⁹² Ibid., para.68(e), 142.

²⁹³ GIRM (2007), para.45, 29.

²⁹⁴ See Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. (London: Burns & Oates, 1959), 103-105. 'Tridentine' refers to the Council of Trent (1545-1563 CE), and in particular to the Missal of Pius V promulgated in 1570 in response to the deliberations of this council.

Mass.²⁹⁵ Pope Paul VI brought the Confiteor into the Mass as one of the elements of the Penitential Rite, a part of the Introductory Rites in the Revised Roman Missal of 1970.²⁹⁶ The GIRM (2007) changes the terminology from Penitential Rite to Act of Penitence²⁹⁷ and describes the purpose of the rite as follows: “The priest invites those present to take part in the Act of Penitence, which, after a brief pause for silence, the entire community carries out through a formula of general confession.”²⁹⁸ In the Mass, the act of penitence is an introductory rite which presumes that sacramental reconciliation has already taken place. Presuming that personal reconciliation with God has already been achieved, Johnson notes that the act of penitence allows the whole community to proclaim its sinfulness before a merciful and forgiving God to show that it is a community ever converting, ever in need of reconciliation with God and others.²⁹⁹

In contrast to the Mass, the act of repentance in the PC is not part of the introductory rites but rather is incorporated as a rite of contrition and repentance. The act of repentance appears after the liturgy of the word at the central point in the liturgy of all sample PC’s (see Table 4.1).³⁰⁰ The purpose

²⁹⁵ As documented by Mark. R. Francis, “Well Begun is Half Done: The New Introductory Rites in the Revised Sacramentary.” in Mark. R. Francis and Keith F. Pecklers., eds, *Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 73.

²⁹⁶ See the “General Instruction on the Roman Missal,” in *Instructions on the Revised Roman Rites* (London: Collins, 1979), para.29, 89.

²⁹⁷ The GIRM (2007) states: “While many expressions drawn from the Church’s most ancient tradition... have remained unchanged, many other expressions have been adapted to today’s needs and circumstances... so revered a treasure would in no way be harmed if some phrases were changed so that the style of language would be more in accord with the language of modern theology and would truly reflect the current discipline of the Church.” para.15, 18.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, para.51, 31.

²⁹⁹ Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 14. The importance of sacramental reconciliation for grave sin *before* receiving the Eucharist has strong biblical foundations (1 Cor.11: 28-32) and is reaffirmed in *The Code of Canon Law*, #916, 211.

³⁰⁰ In early Church liturgies the location of the act of penitence was also at the conclusion of the liturgy of the word. Kunzler believes that the Church should go back to this ancient tradition, writing: “After assembling for prayer and for hearing the word of God the faithful

of this rite in the PC differs from its purpose in the Mass in that the PC does not presume that sacramental reconciliation has already taken place. On the contrary, its stated aim is to work *towards* sacramental reconciliation. Indeed, the RP clearly states that PC's are useful "to help the faithful to prepare for (sacramental) confession which can be made individually at a later time."³⁰¹ The PC leaves it to the individual penitent to decide whether or not their sins require sacramental forgiveness at a later stage.

Appendix II of the RP suggests that the act of repentance can be performed ritually in several ways. In PC's for Lent 2, Advent, Young People and The Sick the act of repentance is ritualised communally in the Confiteor prayer. The rite can also include intercessory prayers in litany form with set responses, as illustrated in PC's for Sin and Conversion, The Son Returns to the Father, The Beatitudes, Children, Young People and The Sick. Although intercessory prayers (prayers of the faithful) are extremely ancient in their origin,³⁰² they gradually disappeared from the Roman liturgy (except on Good Friday) until their use was restored by the Second Vatican Council.³⁰³ The usual order for intercessory prayers in the Mass is: for the needs of the Church, for public authorities and the salvation of the world, for those burdened by any kind of difficulty and for the local community.³⁰⁴ Interestingly, the intercessory prayers in PC's do not follow this traditional pattern, focussing instead on the needs of the particular assembly gathered in prayer (e.g. the sick, young people, etc.). A further series of sample

recognise their need of forgiveness before God and one another. In line with Jesus' words (Mt 5:23f) the mutual forgiveness could be given expression here." Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 199.

³⁰¹ Ibid., para.37, 16.

³⁰² Johnson writes: "St Justin the Martyr, writing in mid-second century Rome, describes the celebration of baptism and then adds that all offer prayers in common for ourselves, for him who had just been enlightened, and for people everywhere (I Apologia 65:1)." Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 50.

³⁰³ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II, "Sacrosanctum concilium,"* para.53, 18.

³⁰⁴ GIRM (2007), para.70, 38.

intercessions and responses is offered in the RP which can be adapted for pastoral use in the PC:

- Intercessions addressed to the Father with the response 'Lord hear our prayer', 'Lord have mercy', or other suitable responses,³⁰⁵ and intercessions with a variable response as in the Liturgy of the Hours.³⁰⁶ These intercessions would be best suited to PC's with opening prayers addressed to God the Father (e.g. Lent 2, Advent, The Son Returns to the Father, The Beatitudes, Young People, Children and The Sick).
- Intercessions addressed to Christ with the response 'Lord hear our prayer', 'Lord have mercy', or other suitable responses,³⁰⁷ and intercessions with a variable response as in the Liturgy of the Hours.³⁰⁸ These intercessions would be best suited to PC's with opening prayers addressed directly to Jesus Christ (e.g. Lent 1, Sin and Conversion).

Another liturgical option for the act of repentance in the PC is the use of the rite of blessing and sprinkling of water as seen in the PC for Lent 1.

Originating in the eighth century as a sign of sanctification, this rite is used to recall the life-giving waters of baptism,³⁰⁹ which is the sacrament for the forgiveness of sins par excellence.³¹⁰ Given that this rite is most commonly used in place of the act of penitence in the celebration of the Mass on Sundays in the Easter season, the placement of this rite in a PC during Lent is

³⁰⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.204 (1), 113.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, para.204 (2), 113.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, para.205 (1), 114-116.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, para.205 (2), 116.

³⁰⁹ See Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 15.

³¹⁰ See CCC, para.1213-1284.

somewhat unusual.³¹¹ The placement of the Sprinkling Rite in a Lenten PC serves as a ritual extension of the examination of conscience. The RP suggests that: “The people should examine their conscience on the baptismal promises which will be renewed at the Easter Vigil.”³¹²

Interestingly, the PC for Lent 1 does not include a renewal of baptismal promises in celebrations during Lent.³¹³ These baptismal promises effectively could serve as an examination of conscience in preparation for the rite of blessing and sprinkling with water. The diversity of rites available in the act of repentance illustrates the clear intention of the ritual architects of these sample PC’s to construct flexible liturgies which can be specifically tailored to meet the pastoral needs of diverse groups of people.

4.2.3.3 *Lord’s Prayer/Embolism*

The communal recitation of the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) is common to all sample PC’s except Lent 1³¹⁴ (see Table 4.1). This prayer holds a privileged place in Christian liturgy as it is a prayer given to the Church by Christ himself.³¹⁵ The first use of the Lord’s Prayer in the celebration of the Eucharist dates back to the fourth century CE.³¹⁶ However the use of the Lord’s Prayer in early Christian liturgies is even older, with mention of the

³¹¹ GIRM (2007), para.51, 31.

³¹² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.12(e), 121.

³¹³ See The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Baptism for Children* (Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1971), para.57-59, 27-28.

³¹⁴ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.13(f), 121-122. Sample PC for Lent I includes an extended prayer after the rite of blessing and sprinkling with water which uses language not dissimilar to the Lord’s Prayer.

³¹⁵ Cf. Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4.

³¹⁶ Johnson traces the origin of the prayer in liturgy to St Ambrose of Milan (339-397 CE) who cites its liturgical use in the Milanese Church. Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 99.

use of the prayer in the *Didache*.³¹⁷ The GIRM (2007) states: “In the Lord’s Prayer a petition is made for daily food, which for Christians means pre-eminently the Eucharistic bread, and also for purification from sin.”³¹⁸ Prayed immediately after the act of repentance, it is the petition for purification from sin, “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,” which gives particular relevance to the liturgical use of the Lord’s Prayer in the PC. In the celebration of the Mass, the Lord’s Prayer is further enhanced by a prayer for deliverance from evil and for peace called the ‘embolism.’ The GIRM (2007) defines the purpose of the embolism as a prayer which begs deliverance from the power of evil for the entire community of the faithful.³¹⁹ Sample PC for Lent 2 includes a short embolism prayer after the Lord’s Prayer (see Table 4.1).³²⁰

4.2.3.4 Act of Contrition

The act of contrition is a rite used in PC’s for Children (see Table 4.1).³²¹ The RP describes the purpose of the act of contrition as an expression of sorrow for sin.³²² This rite appears in PC’s for children because the RP assumes that this PC will be used in those cases where the Sacrament of Penance has not yet been received.³²³ This rite has been added in order to provide a conclusion to the act of repentance for those who cannot frequent the Sacrament of Penance. The act of contrition relies heavily on the use of symbol. The RP suggests that contrition can be symbolised by the placement of some kind of symbol, such as a candle, or written prayer or resolution on

³¹⁷ See Fink, *New Dictionary*, 768-770 and CCC, para.2767, 663. The *Didache* or ‘Teaching of the Apostles’ is a document of early Christian belief and practice compiled in the late 1st/early 2nd century CE.

³¹⁸ GIRM (2007), para.81, 43.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, para.82, 43.

³²⁰ The Roman Ritual, *The Rite of Penance*, para.19(f), 125.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, para.51 (f), 137.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, para.43, 136.

the altar.³²⁴ The symbolism of this ritual illustrates effectively the centrality of the Eucharist to a proper understanding of the social and ecclesial dimensions of sin and reconciliation. Pope John Paul II spoke of this in his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*.³²⁵ It is noteworthy that both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI offered their confessions of responsibility for social sin within the context of the Eucharistic celebration.

The act of contrition concludes with a prayer which can take one of two forms. The first is the personal prayer of the penitent³²⁶ which resembles the prayer before sacramental absolution is offered in Rite 1.³²⁷ The second is a communal prayer led by the celebrant, which is recommended by the RP in instances where the number of penitents is large.³²⁸ This second form concludes with a prayer of absolution which is exactly the same as the final prayer of absolution in the act of penitence in the Liturgy of the Mass: "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen."³²⁹ The generally accepted theological view is that this prayer of absolution, like the prayer that concludes the act of penitence in the Mass, is *non-sacramental*.³³⁰ The GIRM (2007) is careful to warn that the prayer of absolution in the Penitential Rite lacks the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance.³³¹

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Pope John Paul II observes: "The two sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance are very closely connected. Because the Eucharist makes present the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross, perpetuating it sacramentally, it naturally gives rise to a continuous need for conversion." Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2003), para.37, 36.

³²⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.51(f), 137.

³²⁷ Ibid., para.45, 24.

³²⁸ Ibid., para.52(g), 138.

³²⁹ The Roman Missal, *The Sacramentary*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1985), 407.

³³⁰ See Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of its Interpretation*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 264.

³³¹ GIRM (2007) para.51, 31.

It is important to consider the traditional scholastic categories of ‘mortal’ and ‘venial’ sin in relation to the absolution offered in response to the act of penitence in the Mass and the act of contrition in the PC. In R et P, Pope John Paul II reinforces the traditional distinction between ‘venial’ and ‘mortal’ sins, writing: “Man knows well by experience that, along the road of faith and justice he can cease to go forward or can go astray, without abandoning the way of God; and in this case there occurs *venial sin*.”³³² And again: “We call *mortal sin* the act by which man freely and consciously rejects God’s law, preferring to turn in on himself or to some created and finite reality.”³³³ The prevailing theological view is that mortal sins can only be absolved via the Sacrament of Penance. This view has been reinforced by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments which states explicitly that the forgiveness of mortal sin is proper only to the Sacrament of Penance.³³⁴ Whilst the prayer of absolution in the PC or the Mass does not absolve *mortal* sins, it would appear that it can absolve *venial* sins. This interpretation has been reinforced by both the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Sacraments³³⁵ and by Pope John Paul II in R et P.³³⁶ Even though not strictly sacramental, this does not mean that we should downplay the importance of the prayer of absolution given in response to the act of contrition.³³⁷

³³² R et P, 65-66.

³³³ Ibid., 66.

³³⁴ The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular Letter Concerning the Integrity of the Sacrament of Penance* (March 20, 2000) para.9. Website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20000630_circolare-sulla-penitenza%20_en.html (accessed June, 2008).

³³⁵ The Congregation states: “At the same time, since the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice, whenever the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ worthily, they are strengthened in charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away *venial* sins.” Ibid.

³³⁶ See R et P, para.32, 130.

³³⁷ The presence of contrition is a pivotal element in the Sacrament of Penance and indeed in every sacrament of the Church. This will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

4.2.3.5 *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

A prayer of thanksgiving follows the rite of individual confession and absolution in Rites 1 and 2 of Penance.³³⁸ The confessional element of penance has been an integral part of the penitential practice since the very early Church (see 3.1.2). A prayer of thanksgiving, or a prayer in praise of God's mercy (*exomologesis*), is also used as part of the rites of contrition and repentance in PC's for the sick (see Table 4.1).³³⁹ In the PC this prayer of thanksgiving does not follow an oral confession of sin (as in Rites 1 and 2). Rather, it is an acknowledgement of sin, a prayer in praise of God's mercy, and a prayer asking for the help and intercession of the Church.

Accordingly, this rite takes the form of a series of petitions followed by the response: "We praise you and thank you."³⁴⁰ The RP also offers several other variations which can be adapted pastorally.³⁴¹

The purpose of this rite is described in the RP as an acknowledgement of God's power and mercy and a proclamation of the grace of repentance in the life of the entire community.³⁴² Indeed, thanksgiving is a rich part of Christian prayer. The CCC states: "Thanksgiving characterises the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is."³⁴³ In the Mass, the proper time for personal thanksgiving is after receiving Communion. The GIRM (2007) recommends a period of sacred silence after Communion has been received, or else a hymn or canticle of praise.³⁴⁴ The prayer of thanksgiving in the PC for the sick has a similar purpose, revealing the intimate connection between the joyfulness of

³³⁸ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.47, 26; para.56, 35.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, para.70-71, 143.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para.206, 117.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 56, 35.

³⁴³ CCC, para.2637, 634.

³⁴⁴ GIRM (2007), para.164, 65.

Eucharistic celebration³⁴⁵ and the prayer of the Church for those who are sick to find joy in their suffering. The RP also provides for the use of a hymn or canticle of praise in thanksgiving for God's mercy.³⁴⁶

4.2.3.6 *Final Prayer*

Owing to their importance, final prayers appear in all sample PC's (see Table 4.1). The final prayer is similar in purpose to the prayer after communion in the Mass. This prayer first appeared in Christian liturgies in the fifth century and was also known as the 'prayer at the conclusion' since it effectively ended the Eucharistic celebration.³⁴⁷ The GIRM (2007) states: "To bring to completion the prayer of the people of God, and also to conclude the entire Communion Rite, the priest sings or says the prayer after communion, in which he prays for the fruits of the mystery just celebrated."³⁴⁸ In a similar fashion, the final prayer in the PC ends the rites of contrition and repentance and is a prayer asking for the fruits of the liturgical rites just completed to be received. As with the opening prayers, these prayers are either directed to God the Father or to Jesus Christ (Sin and Conversion PC).

4.2.4 Concluding Rites

The concluding rites in PC's consist of: blessing, dismissal and closing hymn.

4.2.4.1 *Blessing*

The final blessing was used in the Church from the time of Pope Gregory I (590-604 CE) in the season of Lent for those penitents who were preparing to

³⁴⁵ United Bible Societies, *The Greek New Testament*, 77. The word 'Eucharist' comes from the Greek verb *Eucharistein*, meaning literally 'to give thanks.'

³⁴⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.56, 35, para.70, 143. Suggestions in the *Rite of Penance* include the Canticle of Mary (Cf. Luke 1: 46-55), or Psalm 135:1-9, 13-14, 16, 25-26.

³⁴⁷ See Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 124.

³⁴⁸ GIRM (2007), para.89, 45.

be reconciled with the Church in the Holy Thursday liturgy.³⁴⁹ However it became more widespread in use with the promulgation of the Missal of Pope Pius V in 1570.³⁵⁰ Given its penitential origins, it is fitting that a blessing should conclude the PC and it appears in all sample PC's (see Table 4.1). The RP provides a number of different blessings in Rite 2 which may be used in PC's,³⁵¹ or they may take the more elaborate form given in sample PC's for the sick.³⁵²

4.2.4.2 *Dismissal*

The purpose of the dismissal is precisely that: to dismiss the liturgical assembly. In the early Roman Church it was the deacon's role to dismiss the liturgical assembly. Johnson writes: "At Rome the customary formula was *Ite missa est*, the Latin *missa* being a technical word for dismissal, i.e. the breaking up of a meeting, the conclusion of an official assembly."³⁵³ Over time, the dismissal became more elaborate and today there are a number of liturgical forms the dismissal can take. The RP preserves the early Church custom of the dismissal being performed by the deacon (if present).³⁵⁴ Rite 1 concludes with a dismissal of those who have participated in the sacramental rite. This form of dismissal would not be appropriate for a non-sacramental liturgy since absolution has not been received. However, two of the four suggested dismissals in the RP which do not make an explicit reference to the forgiveness of sins could be used effectively in a PC.³⁵⁵ Alternatively, the dismissals given during the Mass could also be used, with the exception of

³⁴⁹ See Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 132.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.58, 37-38.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 72, 144.

³⁵³ Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 134.

³⁵⁴ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.59, 38.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para.47, 26-27. Dismissals 1 and 4 are appropriate for use in PC's.

the first which contains an explicit reference to the Mass.³⁵⁶ The response given by the faithful is: "Thanks be to God."³⁵⁷

4.2.4.3 Closing Hymn

The closing hymn accompanies the recession of priests and other ministers out of the liturgical assembly and helps the assembly to close the liturgical celebration. Johnson notes: "The use of a recessional song is one means of prolonging the festive character of the celebration. Ordinarily brief and well known, it expresses praise or reflects the particular day or season."³⁵⁸ The RP recommends the use of a closing hymn in all sample PC's (see Table 4.1). The hymns should be carefully chosen to reflect the particular liturgical assembly celebrating the liturgy (e.g. the sick, children, young people, etc.).

4.3 Summary

The ritual structure of the PC is far more complex than it may at first appear. Ever conscious of the presence of Christ in the midst of the faith-filled assembly, the Church calls penitents to conversion (*metanoia*). The PC has a strong focus on the importance of the liturgy of the word, centred on the freedom from sin won through the paschal mystery (i.e. the death and resurrection of Christ). The themes of conversion and repentance are reinforced in the homily of the PC which is an integral part of the celebration. PC's are meditative in tone, enabling the assembly to reflect thoughtfully on the deliberate choice of words and via the appropriate use of silence. There is an internal theological dynamic of tension at work in the ritual structure of the PC, awakening within the penitent and within the broader community an awareness of sin and a genuine desire for conversion.

³⁵⁶ These dismissals are: "Go in the peace of Christ," or "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." The Roman Missal, *The Sacramentary*, 527.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Johnson, *The Mystery of Faith*, 137.

The PC allows God's word to begin to stir and evoke within the penitent sentiments of conversion and repentance from sin. Unifying the gathered assembly through song and through the use of dialogic and litanic responses, the high point of the liturgy is expressed ritually in the public act of repentance. The PC thus can serve as a trigger for deeper reflection and where necessary as a catalyst for sacramental reconciliation, although this is not its only stated aim. The PC not only looks forward to a more fruitful celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, but in the prayer of thanksgiving it also looks forward to a more fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. As a non-sacramental liturgy, the PC also houses potential to be used in the broader ecumenical context in liturgies of healing and reconciliation.³⁵⁹ The ritual elements of the PC are liturgically effective in raising greater awareness of sin within the individual and community, helping to spread the liturgical load more evenly by unburdening sacramental rites which currently carry the entire weight of the Church's penitential practice.³⁶⁰

The analysis offered in this chapter relates to the general ritual structure of all 9 sample PC's, as illustrated in Appendix II of the *Rite of Penance*, as potential sources for the ritual acknowledgement of social sin. All sample PC's have a ritual structure which could be used effectively as a liturgical framework for the acknowledgement of social sin. How the PC could be fashioned to acknowledge and begin to heal the damaging effects of social sin will be demonstrated in Chapter 5.

³⁵⁹ This is illustrated in the 'Service of Solidarity' liturgy, outlined in Chapter 5.

³⁶⁰ Putney remarks: "Are we still unaware that the Sacrament of Penance is a privileged celebration and is not meant to carry the entire weight of the penitential life and liturgy of the Church? Without such celebrations or their equivalents we will have great difficulty in creating the context for a renewed celebration of the Sacrament of Penance." Putney, "The Sacrament of Penance in Crisis," 24.

CHAPTER 5

The Pastoral Use of the Penitential Celebration

There are examples in the life of the Australian Catholic Church where the PC could be used in liturgies of healing and reconciliation for the damaging effects of social sin. Clergy sexual abuse is one pastoral example where the PC could be employed fruitfully.³⁶¹ A liturgy in response to clergy sexual abuse has already been used in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, the 'Service of Solidarity.' Whilst not a Penitential Celebration per se, the Service of Solidarity did contain some of the ritual elements found in PC's. As such, it also brings useful insights into how the PC could be fashioned in order to respond to the blight of clergy sexual abuse in the Australian Church. These insights will be harnessed in order to construct a proposed PC illustrating the effectiveness and pastoral flexibility of the PC in responding to the social sin of clergy sexual abuse, as it pertains to many local Church and parish communities.

5.1 'Laboratories' for Development

Penitential Celebrations have the liturgical flexibility to respond to specific pastoral needs. The RP offers several examples where the use of the PC could be effective in a pastoral context: to foster the spirit of penance within the Christian community; to help the faithful to prepare for confession which can be made individually later at a convenient time; to help children

³⁶¹ Another example is in the promotion of Indigenous reconciliation. Reconciliation in Australia has been greatly assisted by the recent national government's apology offered to the Stolen Generations. However, Indigenous reconciliation on a national scale has not yet been achieved. The Church's response to the national apology on February 13, 2008 was disappointing. The lack of any liturgical recognition and celebration of this ground-breaking national day of apology in many dioceses in Australia was striking. Perhaps the fact that this was a 'secular' apology contributed to this omission. In any event, PC's could also be used to highlight and promote the process of Indigenous reconciliation, which could otherwise be left to fall by the liturgical wayside.

gradually to form their consciences about sin in human life and about freedom from sin through Christ; to help catechumens during their conversion; in places where no priest is available to give sacramental absolution; and to foster the desire for the Sacrament of Penance.³⁶² However, the RP also recognises the flexibility of the PC to cater for more specific pastoral needs. Accordingly, the RP recommends pastoral adaptation of the PC to address the unique circumstances of each particular community.³⁶³

Dallen suggests that incorporation of the sample PC's into the *Rite of Penance* effectively serves to provide a necessary creative testing ground (i.e. a 'laboratory') for the development of new and dynamic models of reconciliation in the contemporary Church.³⁶⁴ In a similar vein, Grigassy suggests that the provision of these draft PC's in the RP is an open invitation for the Church to respond to the many pastoral issues that often fall outside of the more traditional sacramental umbrella.³⁶⁵ The liturgical recognition and forgiveness of social sin is one such experimental focus which can be

³⁶² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.37, 16. This is not however an exhaustive list, as this dissertation will argue. The PC could also be effective in the recognition and acknowledgement of social sin.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, para.40(b), 17; para.3, 119.

³⁶⁴ Dallen writes: "Crucial to developing coherent forms of penance for our times is a sound comprehension of the dynamics of conversion. Only with a grasp of these dynamics will we be able to develop community structures for supporting it and rituals for celebrating reconciliation of the converted. Penitential celebrations, though rarely used in English speaking countries (probably because of their non-sacramental character), are the likeliest laboratory for these developments. They are potentially the most valuable rite in the Rite of Penance for fostering ongoing conversion, revitalising the various structures in community life for supporting such conversion, and broadening the understanding of ministry." James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: The Rite of Penance*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 386.

³⁶⁵ Grigassy suggests: The ritual architects carefully crafted the rites in Appendix II and attached them to the official reformed *Rite of Penance*. The freedom and flexibility of the model rites offer rich opportunities to attend creatively to a wide range of pastoral needs. These evolving rites are often created spontaneously in response to pastoral need. The development of penitential services attend to some additional areas of human need that cry out for ritual pastoral care: victimisation, addiction, alienation, ecumenism, immigration, and human diminishment." Grigassy, "Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation," 21.

explored in the 'laboratory' of the Penitential Celebration. As PC's are not as heavily weighed down by directives governing their licit use (as are the current sacramental rites) there is considerable flexibility in the method of their celebration in myriad pastoral contexts. The PC provides a rich framework upon which liturgies for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin can be fashioned. An example of such a framework appears in Appendix II of the RP in the sample PC for Sin and Conversion.

5.2 The Sin and Conversion Penitential Celebration

The pastoral flexibility of the PC is well illustrated in the sample liturgy for Sin and Conversion.³⁶⁶ The theme of this PC is centred on the Apostle Peter, chosen by Christ to be the first leader of the Christian Church.³⁶⁷ Peter's sin of the denial of Christ represented a lack of courage and honesty in his unwillingness to acknowledge publicly his faith in Christ for fear of retribution. Peter's contrition and Christ's forgiveness of Peter's sin is an underlying ecclesiological theme in this PC, which correlates the failings occurring in the leadership of the Church today with the failings in the leadership of the Church when it was first established.

Like Peter, Church leaders (and other members of the Church) can also be led to sincere contrition. The Sin and Conversion PC highlights for the Church the hope that there is no failing and no sin so serious that it cannot and will not be forgiven by Christ. This PC provides a rich liturgical framework that could focus effectively on the role of the leader(s) of the local Church and their call to repentance for social sin. This PC also contains ritual elements which could be used as a foundation in the construction of a PC for

³⁶⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, Appendix II, para.25-30, 129-131.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Matthew 16:13-20.

Table 5.2 *Ritual Structure of the ‘Sin and Conversion’ PC*

INTRODUCTORY RITES	
Opening Hymn	X
Greeting	X
Explanation of Theme	X
Opening Prayer	X
LITURGY OF THE WORD	
First Gospel Reading	X
Second Gospel Reading	X
Responsorial Psalm/Hymn	X
Third Gospel Reading	X
Homily	X
RITEs OF REPENTANCE AND CONTRITION	
Examination of Conscience	X
Act of Repentance: <i>Confiteor</i>	X -
<i>Blessing/Sprinkling of Water</i>	-
<i>Intercessions</i>	x
Lord’s Prayer	X
Embolism	-
Act of Contrition	-
Prayer of Thanksgiving	-
Final Prayer	X
CONCLUDING RITES	
Blessing	X
Dismissal	X
Closing Hymn	X

communities harmed by clergy sexual abuse (such as that proposed in section 5.4).

5.2.1 Ritual Analysis of Sin and Conversion PC

Table 5.2 shows the ritual elements that

comprise the Sin and Conversion PC. There are a number of unique ritual elements in this PC that illustrate its deeply Christological focus.

The RP suggests that the opening hymn for this PC could be based on an appropriate penitential psalm such as psalm 139.³⁶⁸ Unlike other PC’s which have opening prayers directed to God the Father, the opening prayer in this PC is addressed directly to Christ and prays that as Peter repented of his sin and acknowledged Christ, that we too may turn away from our sins and turn back to Christ.³⁶⁹

The liturgy of the word in the Sin and Conversion PC is notable because it represents a shift away from that to which liturgical assemblies would certainly be accustomed in the Mass, as all three suggested readings are

gospel texts. Although gospel texts for all three readings are not usually encountered, this is done deliberately in this sample PC because it suits the Christological focus of the service. The RP suggests that the liturgy of the

³⁶⁸ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.25(a), 129.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, para.25(a), 129.

word in this PC should proceed by highlighting the gospel text of Luke 22: 31-34 in the first reading followed by a period of silence. This text recounts Christ's warning to Peter that he would betray him and Christ's prayer that Peter's faith in him would remain. It then recommends Luke 22: 54-62 as the second reading followed by a period of silence. This text recounts Peter's threefold denial of Christ and Christ's warning to Peter that he would deny him.

The liturgy of the word is unique also in that the responsorial psalm comes after the second reading and not before, as is usually the case. This is done so as to not interrupt the flow between the first and second gospel readings. The responsorial psalm is based on the penitential psalms 31, 51 or another appropriate song.³⁷⁰ The third reading is the gospel of John 21: 15-19.³⁷¹ This text recounts Christ's forgiveness of Peter's denial and his mandate to lead the early Christian Church. The three gospel readings are powerful in their impact and the use of meditative silence following each of the texts allows them to resonate among the assembly.

A Christologically focussed homily also serves to reinforce the underlying theme that Christ is always willing to forgive, no matter how grave the social sin may be. The RP suggests that the homily in a PC of Sin and Conversion should centre on four key aspects of the gospel readings: the trust we put in God's grace, the faithfulness required of followers of the Lord, the weakness by which we often fall into sin and the mercy of the Lord who welcomes the sinner as a friend.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Ibid., para.26(b), 129.

³⁷¹ Ibid., para.26(b), 129. The RP offers a number of alternative biblical readings which can be ritually adapted for a PC of this kind. See para.101-201, 42-111. However, in order to protect the integrity of the rite, readings chosen should follow the readings as outlined in the RP.

³⁷² Ibid., para.27(c), 129.

The act of repentance in the PC for Sin and Conversion is once again deeply Christological. The prayers of intercession are directed to Christ the Lord and the response to each petition is taken from the gospel of John 21: "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."³⁷³ The RP suggests that each invocation may be said by different individuals,³⁷⁴ which offers an opportunity for the act of repentance, the high point of the PC liturgy, to be read out by the different stakeholders affected by the social sin. The rites of repentance and contrition do not include the Confiteor, a rite of blessing and sprinkling of holy water or any of the other liturgical options that can be utilised. The act of contrition and prayer of thanksgiving have also been omitted from this sample liturgy, in keeping with its simplicity of theme and structure.

The closing prayer in the Sin and Conversion PC is once again deeply Christological and, unlike any other sample PC, is addressed directly to the person of Christ and not God the Father. The final prayer is a summation of the entire celebration and prays that we, like Peter, will have the faith to turn away from our sins and turn back to Christ.³⁷⁵

5.2.2 Summary

The main strength of the Sin and Conversion PC is that the rites are deeply Christological from beginning to end. The themes developed in the introductory rites and in the liturgy of the word are reinforced and elaborated in the rites of repentance and contrition and in the concluding rites which gives this particular PC a consistency in theological theme and liturgical tone. This is important for several reasons. First, the consistency of

³⁷³ Ibid., para.29(e), 130.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., para.30(f), 130-131.

a liturgical model with a simple theological theme may be more meaningful and easy to follow, especially for a penitent who is not actively practising their faith. Second, the gospel readings flow in a logical way that clearly reveals the theme of the liturgy, starting with Peter's sin and continuing on to his contrition. Third, the act of repentance (the high point of the liturgy) reinforces the message that has already been heard in the gospel readings. There are no new themes introduced into this PC except the ones that have been outlined from the opening prayer. The simplicity and comprehensibility of this PC make it an ideal sample liturgy to be utilised for those who may be at a distance from the Church (as in the example of clergy sexual abuse).

The main weakness of the Sin and Conversion PC is that several of the important rites of contrition and repentance have either been omitted or simplified in order to make this PC clear and easy to follow. These rites would need to be further explored and developed in order for the ritual expression of contrition and repentance in a liturgy for the forgiveness of social sin to be fully realised. However, there is much to recommend the use of this sample PC for Sin and Conversion as a liturgical model which could be adapted pastorally for liturgies of healing and reconciliation for social sin where the explicit focus is on the leaders of the Church and their call to repentance and conversion.

The use of the PC for the recognition and forgiveness of social sin in the Australian Catholic Church is still largely untested. However, an example of such a liturgy has been used in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. This liturgy dealt with the social sin of clergy sexual abuse. The next section will harness some of the liturgical insights offered in the Service of Solidarity which, together with the Sin and Conversion PC, sheds much needed

pastoral light on how a PC for the social sin of clergy sexual abuse could be conducted.

5.3 The Service of Solidarity

In the Sacred Heart Cathedral in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle on August 7, 2008, an ecumenical Service of Solidarity was held for survivors of clergy sexual abuse. This service represents an important precedent for the liturgical recognition of a social sin in the life of the Australian Catholic Church. In recognition that the effects of sexual abuse ripple far beyond the confines of any particular worshipping community, Bishop Michael Malone of Maitland-Newcastle stated: "We recognise that this issue is always painful for many within our community, especially for those most directly affected. This service is an opportunity to acknowledge that pain, to strengthen our commitment to learn from and redress past wrongs, and to continue to work towards a safe community for all."³⁷⁶

5.3.1 Ritual Analysis of the Service of Solidarity

The ritual structure of the Service of Solidarity appears in Table 5.3. The cathedral Church in Maitland-Newcastle was packed to overflowing for this liturgy with survivors, family, friends, clergy, parishioners and the wider community of Maitland-Newcastle all in attendance. The Service of Solidarity was ecumenical in nature and not just for the local Catholic community. Parish priests sat with their parish communities in the pews of the cathedral Church. The gesture of welcome was facilitated by ushers offering those in attendance unlit candles and olive sprigs. The appropriately

³⁷⁶ Cath News – A Service of Church Resources, "Newcastle to Hold Solidarity Service for Abuse Victims," (August 7, 2008) Website: <http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid+8403> (accessed August, 2008).

Table 5.3 *Ritual Structure of the ‘Service of Solidarity’ Liturgy*

INTRODUCTORY RITES	
Opening Hymn	X
Greeting	X
Explanation of Theme	-
Opening Prayer	X
LITURGY OF THE WORD	
First Reading	X
Responsorial Psalm/Hymn	X
Second Reading	X
Gospel	-
Homily	X
RITEs OF REPENTANCE AND CONTRITION	
Examination of Conscience	X
Act of Repentance:	X
<i>Confiteor</i>	-
<i>Blessing/Sprinkling of Water</i>	-
<i>Intercessions</i>	X
Lord’s Prayer	-
Embolism	-
Act of Contrition	-
Prayer of Thanksgiving	-
Final Prayer	X
CONCLUDING RITES	
Blessing	X
Dismissal	X
Closing Hymn	X

chosen opening hymn was ‘Gather Us In’.³⁷⁷

Bishop Michael Malone’s greeting reflected the ecumenical nature of the liturgy when he stated: “Our experience shows that this issue (of sexual abuse) demands that we work collaboratively, beyond divisions of culture or belief. I hope this is an opportunity for the whole community to stand in solidarity with all those who have been affected by abuse.”³⁷⁸

After the greeting by Bishop Malone, those in attendance were invited to come forward and light their candles from the paschal candle situated near the altar and to place them on the side and back altars of the cathedral.³⁷⁹

Although such a ritual was powerful, the placement of the candles on more than one altar (placing all of the candles on one altar was impossible due to the large numbers) diminished to some extent the attempt at symbolising the imagery of communion that was trying to be conveyed.

³⁷⁷ Sr. Carmel Pilcher RSJ. Liturgy Consultant and Resource Person. “Service of Solidarity”, Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. (e-mail to author, August 17, 2008).

³⁷⁸ Cath News – A Service of Church Resources, “Newcastle to Hold Solidarity Service for Abuse Victims.”

³⁷⁹ The paschal or Easter candle is first blessed and lit during the Easter Vigil Mass. It is a liturgical symbol for the presence of the risen Christ in the liturgical assembly.

The placement of this rite is somewhat curious as it could be argued that such a ritual is far better suited to the rites of contrition and repentance than it is to the introductory rites. In particular, the act of contrition is a rite which explicitly involves the placement of symbols (such as candles) and may well have been a more suitable moment in the liturgy for the placement of symbols on the altar (see 4.2.3.4). The opening prayer for the service was liturgically appropriate and was specifically tailored to theme of sexual abuse.³⁸⁰

As an ecumenical liturgy, the Service of Solidarity included a liturgy of the word that was deliberately 'secularised' to provide an opportunity for both Christians and non-Christians to celebrate a communal liturgical ritual. The liturgy of the word included an appropriate first reading taken from the Old Testament (Micah 6: 8) and a second non-scriptural reflection from Henri Nouwen.³⁸¹ The responsorial psalm was replaced by the hymn 'Hands of Healing' by Marty Haugen and there was no gospel reading in the service. While the use of a non-scriptural text³⁸² and hymn would be liturgically permissible in the PC, the lack of a gospel text would not. This is because the gospel reading forms an integral part of the liturgy of the word in the PC,

³⁸⁰ The opening prayer read: "Compassionate God, in whose enduring love we trust, Help us all to show care and compassion to each other and especially to those of us who have been betrayed by abuse at the hands of others. Begin to heal them so that they may continue to receive and give love with greater confidence in their dignity as your daughters and sons. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God forever and ever. Amen." Pilcher, "Service of Solidarity."

³⁸¹ The text read: "What are our wounds? They have been spoken about in many ways by many voices. Words such as "alienation", "separation", "isolation" and "loneliness" have been used as the names of our wounded condition. Maybe the word "loneliness" best expresses our immediate experience and therefore most fittingly enables us to understand our brokenness. A community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision. Mutual sharing then becomes a mutual deepening of hope, and sharing weakness becomes a reminder to one and all of the coming strength." Pilcher, "Service of Solidarity."

³⁸² See The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.36, 16.

and as such appears in all sample PC's (see Table 4.1). The greatest strength of the liturgy of the word (and indeed in the entire liturgy) was the homily, in which Bishop Malone recalled the apologies for social sin made as part of the national apology to the Stolen Generations and in Pope Benedict XVI's apology and then applied them to survivors of clergy sexual abuse. He then personally apologised to survivors of clergy sexual abuse in the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.³⁸³

In the Service of Solidarity the rites of repentance and contrition were comprised of an examination of conscience and an act of repentance. The examination of conscience consisted of a series of short meditations based on excerpts from the book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*:

³⁸³ An excerpt from Bishop Malone's homily reads: "The 13th February, 2008 was a very significant day, it was the day that Australia said 'sorry' for past injustices to the Stolen Generations of our Indigenous people. In my opinion that day, 13th February, 2008, was a pivotal point in our nation's history. To be able to name and acknowledge past mistakes, to be able to admit fault and apologise, is a sign of a mature nation. Of course, people will be quick to add that an apology is one thing! Action must follow – and they are right to say so: action must support an apology. From 13th February, 2008 we fast-forward to 19th July, 2008 when Pope Benedict XVI made an apology to all victims of sexual abuse at a Mass at St Mary's Cathedral Sydney. Just as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised on behalf of the Government and Parliament of Australia, so too did Pope Benedict apologise on behalf of the Church. Again, people will say that action must follow the Pope's apology. This gathering tonight is a declaration that the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle intends to act in a more compassionate and caring way towards victims of sexual abuse. As bishop of this Diocese for over 13 years I admit to you that I have felt torn between loyalty to the Church, loyalty to Church personnel of whom I am one, and loyalty to the victims or survivors of sexual abuse. That dilemma is now solved. I have met with and personally apologised to survivors on behalf of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Tonight, at this public gathering, I apologise to you and to all the people of the diocese for the great pain, the shame you have felt and the terrible damage done to the Church. As bishop of the Diocese I am sorry! On behalf of former bishops of this diocese I am sorry! On behalf of the Catholic community of Maitland-Newcastle I am sorry! To the people of Newcastle, the Hunter and the Manning, I am sorry! For my personal mistakes in this area I am sorry! I will no longer make excuses for the failure of the Church to be compassionate. I will speak honestly and sincerely about the deep evil which is sexual abuse. Care of victims, be they individuals, families or parish communities, must always be our first concern. May we not be found wanting."

Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle website:

<http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/bishop/writings/writings070808.htm> (accessed August, 2008).

Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus by Bishop Geoffrey Robinson.³⁸⁴ Although this is quite an acceptable way of performing the rite as outlined in the RP, it contained statements rather than reflections and/or questions which could have lead to more adequate periods of reflective silence and meditation as outlined in the RP.³⁸⁵

The act of repentance took the form of a litany of intercessory prayers, which more closely resembled the structure of intercessions for the celebration of the Mass than the suggested structure for use in the PC (see 4.2.3.2).³⁸⁶ Whilst appropriate, these prayers did not flow naturally from the brief themes outlined in liturgy of the word and from the examination of conscience. These shortcomings meant that there was a variation in theme and tone in the rites of repentance and contrition which differed from the rites

³⁸⁴ The meditations read:

Reader 1. The promise of Jesus Christ was not that the Church will never make mistakes, but that it will survive its mistakes.

Reader 2. For the truth of Jesus Christ will always be present in the Church – tarnished and even obscured, but always there to be rediscovered.

Reader 1. The Church’s faith will often be weak, its love lukewarm, its hope wavering, but that on which its faith is based, its love is rooted and its hope is built will always endure.

Reader 2. There is an absolute certainty of faith, but it is first and foremost a certainty in something that comes before words. It is faith in the person of Jesus Christ and the love that fills his story.

Pilcher, “Service of Solidarity.”

³⁸⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.3, 145-147.

³⁸⁶ The intercessions read:

We pray for all those affected by abuse from Church personnel. May they find some hope and healing in the support of this community. Lord hear us.

We pray that as a community we may take up the call of Pope Benedict XVI to show care, compassion and justice to all affected by abuse. Lord hear us.

We pray for the clergy and religious who have been deeply wounded by the acts of some within their communities, that they may reconcile this betrayal and find peace in their calling. Lord hear us.

We pray for the communities split apart by this evil, that they may be once again united in their faith. Lord hear us.

We pray for Michael our Bishop that he may continue to act with courage and resolve to combat this evil. We pray for his efforts to promote a safer and more wholesome environment, especially for our young people. Lord hear us.

Pilcher, “Service of Solidarity.”

immediately preceding them. This lack of theological consistency tended to diminish the power of these fundamental rites.

The final prayer was specifically and appropriately tailored to the theme of sexual abuse.³⁸⁷ The concluding hymn was 'Receive the Power.' This hymn was composed by Guy Sebastian and Gary Pinto as theme song for the World Youth Day in Sydney 2008. This hymn was extremely appropriate for use in the Service of Solidarity as it was within the context of the Sydney World Youth Day 2008 proceedings that Pope Benedict XVI apologised to survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

5.3.2 Summary

The Service of Solidarity was a somewhat awkward liturgy that tried to blend some of the ritual elements of the PC within a more flexible 'secularised' setting. This awkwardness is understandable given that the liturgical assembly was ecumenical. However the liturgy did have a number of strong points: it illustrated the need for such a service in the life of the Australian Church; it showed that an ecumenical liturgy of this kind is possible (provided that it stays within clearly defined liturgical parameters); it illustrated the powerful nature of a liturgy in which all of the major community stakeholders adversely affected by social sin can come together; celebrating the liturgy in a cathedral, led by the bishop of the diocese, is a clear sign of unity which does much to bring needed healing into local communities damaged by the blight of clergy sexual abuse; and finally it

³⁸⁷ The final prayer read: "Creator God your image is alive in every person giving us dignity. Create in us a desire to work together sharing our time our energy our skills and talents and our wealth. Give us ears to hear eyes to see and hearts to love, so that we reflect you in our living, in the choices we make, the words we speak, the actions we do. Jesus is the good news to the poor, as followers may we recognise the call to be the same. Amen." Pilcher, "Service of Solidarity."

contributed to the healing and reconciliation of survivors present in the liturgy.³⁸⁸ The Service of Solidarity lends considerable pastoral weight to the feasibility of the PC as a liturgical rite for the recognition and forgiveness of social sin. The construction of a PC for communities harmed by clergy sexual abuse is a logical next step in the ongoing development of liturgies of healing and reconciliation in the life of the Australian Catholic Church. The manner in which such a PC might be conducted will be outlined in the next section.

5.4 Proposed PC for Communities Harmed by Abuse

It is clear at this time in history that the Catholic Church in Australia needs to find genuine and sincere ways to demonstrate to the stakeholders involved in sexual abuse: those who may have caused harm, clergy, survivors, families, friends, local Church and school communities and indeed the wider Australian community, that it is willing to foster healing and work towards reconciliation. The need for such a demonstration is now even more urgent in the wake of Pope Benedict XVI's apology to the survivors of clergy sexual abuse, so that the Pope's call for "compassion and care" in their pastoral treatment can be implemented. Liturgies of healing and reconciliation are needed which respond appropriately to the damaging effects of the social sin of clergy sexual abuse. Kavanagh regards the liturgical response to pastoral issues such as this (as they occur in the life of the Church) to be acts of theology in the first instance (*theologia prima*). Kavanagh writes: "I infer that the adjustment which the assembly undertakes in response to the God-induced change it suffers in its liturgical

³⁸⁸ Anne, a survivor abused by her parish priest commented on the importance of the service: "When we decided to speak out we became isolated, really it was the worst time of our lives because nobody wanted to accept what was happening in the Church. But now things are changing and I do believe this service is a positive thing." Cath News – A Service of Church Resources, "Newcastle to Hold Solidarity Service for Abuse Victims."

events is a dynamic, critical, reflective, and sustained act of theology in the first instance, of *theologia prima*.”³⁸⁹

The Catholic Church in Australia is in need of a new act of *theologia prima* in response to the social sin of clergy sexual abuse. The blight of clergy sexual abuse is one situation where a PC could be fashioned for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin. A PC for communities harmed by clergy sexual abuse is one way in which this new act of *theologia prima* could be met. This proposed PC could build on the sample PC for Sin and Conversion and combine this with ritual elements found in other sample PCs, along with insights gleaned from the Service of Solidarity liturgy. This proposed PC would be celebrated ideally in the diocesan cathedral, led by the Catholic bishop but celebrated ecumenically (as in the Service of Solidarity).³⁹⁰ However, it would also be suitable for celebration in a parish, particularly where parishioners have experienced clergy sexual abuse first hand and where the community has been traumatised as a result. Peter Cullinane, bishop of the diocese of Palmerston in New Zealand, sees a particular need for such liturgies in communities where those who may have caused harm include the leader of that community – the parish priest. He observes:

Sooner or later we need to look to the middle distance and long-term needs of these communities. What happens, for example, when their former pastor is to be released after completing his prison sentence? Both individuals and peoples who have been the victims of abuses of

³⁸⁹ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 77.

³⁹⁰ The Second Vatican Council recommended “full, active and conscious participation in liturgical celebrations.” Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II, “Sacrosanctum concilium,”* para.14, 7. Full participation in an ecumenical liturgy could be greatly enhanced with the use of an order of service detailing set prayers and responses.

power and oppression need a sort of healing of memories in order to become free of past evils.³⁹¹

The benefit of using the PC as the liturgical context in which to address social sin centres on the ability of such a ritual to begin the process of healing of memories that Cullinane identifies. PC's celebrated in and amongst the worshipping community could effectively assist in promoting not only the reconciliation of particular communities affected by the social sin of clergy sexual abuse but also, and perhaps even more fundamentally, they could effect a purification of memory through the reconciliation of the collective 'memory' of the past.³⁹² Such a liturgy would only be encountered rarely in the course of the Church's liturgical year.³⁹³ As we saw in Chapter 3, Pope John Paul II celebrated the *purification of memory* liturgy on the First Sunday of Lent which he designated as a 'Universal Day of Pardon'. Therefore the Lenten season (because of its penitential character) would be an appropriate time for the celebration of this liturgy. The ritual structure of a proposed PC for communities harmed by abuse appears in Table 5.4.

5.4.1 Ritual Analysis of Proposed PC

5.4.1.1 Introductory Rites

The introductory rites in this proposed PC would consist of: opening hymn, greeting, explanation of the theme and opening prayer (see Table 5.4). The RP suggests that the entrance song for PC's based on the themes of sin and

³⁹¹ Peter Cullinane, "Community Healing: A Search for Guiding Principles." *Australasian Catholic Record* lxxiv, issue 4 (October, 1997): 390.

³⁹² See footnote 182.

³⁹³ Kavanagh comments: "The liturgy is not 'for' anyone but the entire Church locally assembled. Abnormal pastoral conditions may indeed necessitate abnormal liturgical activity. Even so, the abnormality of such activity must never be lost sight of. When normality is recovered, abnormal practice is discontinued just as special medication is discontinued when health is restored." Aidan Kavanagh, *Elements of Rite*. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 14.

Table 5.4 *Ritual Structure of Proposed PC for Communities Harmed by Abuse*

INTRODUCTORY RITES	
Opening Hymn	X
Greeting	X
Explanation of Theme	X
Opening Prayer	X
LITURGY OF THE WORD	
First Gospel Reading	X
Second Gospel Reading	X
Responsorial Psalm/Hymn	X
Third Gospel Reading	X
Homily	X
RITEs OF REPENTANCE AND CONTRITION	
Examination of Conscience	X
Act of Repentance: <i>Confiteor</i>	X
<i>Blessing/Sprinkling of Water</i>	x
<i>Intercessions</i>	x
Lord's Prayer	X
Embolism	X
Rite of Peace	X
Act of Contrition	X
Prayer of Thanksgiving	X
Final Prayer	X
CONCLUDING RITES	
Blessing	X
Dismissal	X
Closing Hymn	X

conversion should be carefully chosen to reflect the penitential nature of the liturgy. Suggestions in the RP include songs based on psalms 139, 16 and 23-24.³⁹⁴ Accordingly, the popular and well known hymn 'The Lord is my Shepherd' would be an appropriate hymn. The greeting in a PC of this kind is vitally important as it must make all present in the assembly feel welcome. Bishop Malone's greeting in the Service of Solidarity is of the sort envisaged for this proposed PC (see 5.3.1).

The opening prayer for this PC could come from the sample PC for Sin and Conversion.³⁹⁵ This Christological prayer inspires sentiments of contrition and repentance which are the central theme of this celebration. Ordained Church leaders must take the initiative to express public contrition (*metanoia*) for those times when they and others have failed to live up to their call as leaders in the Church by openly admitting the blight of clergy sexual abuse, and also admitting that there have been times when they have failed in their duty to speak out and act against

³⁹⁴ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.25(a), 129.

³⁹⁵ The opening prayer reads: "Lord Jesus, you turned and looked on Peter when he denied you for the third time. He wept for his sin and turned again to you in sincere repentance. Look now on us and touch our hearts, so that we may turn back to you and be always faithful in serving you, for you live and reign forever and ever. Amen." Ibid.

abuse through fear of retribution and/or public scandal.

5.4.1.2 *Liturgy of the Word*

The liturgy of the word in this proposed PC would consist of: first gospel reading, second gospel reading, responsorial psalm/hymn, third gospel reading and homily (see Table 5.4). The readings could come from the series of gospel readings as suggested in the PC for Sin and Conversion: Luke 22:31-34, 54-62 and John 21:15-19 (see 5.2.1). Given that there are three gospel readings, each gospel text could be read by three different members of the participating clergy in the PC. Ideally this would include representatives from each of the three orders of ministry: bishop, priest and deacon. This is not only liturgically correct (as the gospel is often proclaimed by a deacon) but it also symbolises the unity and diversity of the clerical ministry in the diocese and that sorrow for the sin of clergy sexual abuse permeates all ranks of the ordained clergy. The RP suggests that a period of silence should follow each reading.³⁹⁶ Given that each gospel text is only a short reflection, the assembly could stand and welcome each gospel with the Lenten gospel acclamation (as this PC is suggested for use in the Lenten season).³⁹⁷ Any of the penitential psalms would be appropriate for use as a responsorial psalm, or a Lenten hymn based on the penitential psalms.³⁹⁸

The homily in a PC of this kind presents a unique opportunity for the expression of a public apology by Church leader(s). We saw in Chapter 3 that public apologies for social sin from authoritative leaders were among

³⁹⁶ Ibid., para.26(b), 129.

³⁹⁷ The Lectionary for Mass states: "The Alleluia or, as the liturgical season requires, the verse before the gospel, is also a rite or act of standing by itself. It serves as the greeting of welcome of the assembled faithful to the Lord who is about to speak to them and as an expression of their faith through song." *The Liturgy Documents*, 129.

³⁹⁸ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.26(b), 129. The RP suggests that the penitential psalms 31, 51, or an appropriate hymn based on these psalms, would be appropriate.

the most powerful elements of the three group apologies studied. The Service of Solidarity also illustrated how powerful a homily can be in conveying a sincere public apology. Indeed, survivors of clergy abuse are often searching for sincere acts of contrition from Church leaders who have been complicit in the structural silence and cover-up of abuse. The challenge is for all Church leaders (especially the bishop(s) of the diocese) to take up this responsibility for conveying public contrition, as it is a necessary first step along the path to reconciliation. The homily Bishop Malone used in the Service of Solidarity is of the sort envisaged for a homily in a PC of this kind, and what it should aim to achieve.³⁹⁹

5.4.1.3 Rites of Repentance and Contrition

The rites of repentance and contrition in this proposed PC would consist of: examination of conscience, act of repentance, Lord's Prayer and embolism, rite of peace, act of contrition and final prayer (see Table 5.4). The examination of conscience in a liturgy of this kind could also be adapted pastorally in order to incorporate stories of the survivors of sexual abuse.⁴⁰⁰ It is important to balance the contrition shown by Church leaders with the stories of those directly affected by abuse. As we saw in Chapter 3, the sharing of stories was a vital component of the success of the Australian national apology to the Stolen Generations and in the process of community healing.⁴⁰¹ According to Neil Brown, the advantage of celebrating communal rites such as this lies in their ability to heal 'shame' experiences. Brown

³⁹⁹ See footnote 383.

⁴⁰⁰ The difficulty here would be in deciding which stories to include and which to omit. If a person who experienced abuse first hand narrates his/her experience, strategies for dealing with such an emotional sharing would need to be employed, and provision would need to be made for focussed pastoral "back-up" after the liturgy concludes.

⁴⁰¹ See pages 60-61.

writes: "Shame is far better able to be healed in a communal context where the encouraging support of others is experienced first-hand."⁴⁰²

Just how such a sharing of survivors' stories could be achieved is an important pastoral consideration.⁴⁰³ Such a presentation could serve as a meditative introduction to the examination of conscience proper, which the RP suggests could be performed by the meditations offered in Appendix III,⁴⁰⁴ or such a presentation could be effected in a special way by penitents examining their consciences by meditating on the promises made at baptism.⁴⁰⁵ The *Rite of Baptism* incorporates several questions related to the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith which could be adapted as questions for reflection and meditation on the specific theme of sexual abuse.⁴⁰⁶

The act of repentance in a PC for communities harmed by clergy sexual abuse could be performed in a number of ways. The Confiteor could be used effectively in a liturgy for the forgiveness of social sin to highlight not only sins of commission but also those sins of omission which are often so much an integral part of the social sin of sexual abuse.⁴⁰⁷ When introducing the Confiteor, the celebrant might invite the congregation to be particularly mindful of what the gathered community has *failed to do* in not responding to

⁴⁰² Brown, "The Communal Nature of Reconciliation," 7.

⁴⁰³ One very good option now available in many Australian Churches is the use of modern audio-visual equipment, such as the use of so-called 'Power-Point' presentations.

⁴⁰⁴ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, 145-147.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, para.12(e), 121.

⁴⁰⁶ For example, the renunciation of sin in the Rite of Baptism asks: "Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's Children?" The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Baptism*, para.57, 27. Reflection could be further enhanced by the use of non-scriptural meditations on the nature of social sin in the liturgy of the word. Appropriate excerpts taken from official Church documents; or from Bishop Robinson's challenging: *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* (as used in the Service of Solidarity) could also be used.

⁴⁰⁷ See The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.19(f), 124.

the reality of sexual abuse occurring in its midst. As an alternative to the Confiteor, the ritual of blessing and sprinkling of water to recall baptism could also be used during Lent to highlight both the damage that social sin causes to the worshipping community and the need for the 'washing clean' of the sins of the community through the waters of baptism.⁴⁰⁸

In keeping with the format of the Sin and Conversion PC, the act of repentance could be concluded with a series of intercessions and responses (see 5.2.1).⁴⁰⁹ Each intercession could be read by different stakeholders adversely affected by the social sin of clergy sexual abuse: clergy, survivors, friends, families, parishioners, local school community, wider community, etc. Intercessions in addition to those outlined in the RP could be added to highlight the particular social sin(s) relevant to the PC.⁴¹⁰

The Lord's Prayer in a PC for communities harmed by sexual abuse could be extended to include an embolism and rite of peace. In the Mass, the Lord's Prayer and embolism lead into the rite of peace as part of the Communion Rite. The GIRM (2007) describes the rite of peace as a rite symbolising mutual charity and ecclesial communion.⁴¹¹ Even though a rite of peace is not explicitly mentioned for use in any of the sample PC's offered in the RP, the PC for Lent 2 does recommend various acts of penance and charity that the assembly could perform in order to "make up for some injustice in the community."⁴¹² The use of the rite of peace in a PC for communities harmed by abuse could be a potentially powerful ritual symbolising the desire of the

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., para.13 (f), 121.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., para.29(e), 130.

⁴¹⁰ In his sample ritual, Peter Fink includes suitable tropes such as: "That we never use power to abuse or oppress. Let us pray to the Lord... That we may be purified of our sins: those we see, and those to which we are blind. Let us pray to the Lord." Peter E. Fink, "Alternative 3," 137.

⁴¹¹ GIRM (2007), para.82, 43.

⁴¹² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.19(f), 125.

community for ecclesial communion and reconciliation. The challenge of highlighting the rite of peace in a liturgy of this sort is in finding a meaningful symbolic way of exchanging peace that is different from the handshake that normally occurs in the Mass.⁴¹³ J. Michael Joncas remarks:

Our current ritual problem is the gesture. Right now, as we invite the peace of the Lord on our neighbours, we use a gesture borrowed from common Rotarian fellowship – the same gesture, in fact, that people use when they have just concluded a contract and screwed someone else to the wall. That is going to be our gesture of peace?⁴¹⁴

To highlight effectively the role our hands play in socially sinful actions, a communal washing of hands (lavabo) could occur using some of the water used in the rite of sprinkling.⁴¹⁵ Such a ritual washing of hands highlights the need for cleansing ourselves of the damage that sexual abuse causes to the community.⁴¹⁶ It also serves as a reminder to the assembly (clergy and laity) that we are all called to action (i.e. to use our hands) in healing the damaging effects of social sin wherever it is found, in our Church or in our world.

⁴¹³ The GIRM (2007) states: “In Australia the most common form of the gesture of peace is the handshake, although different practices according to region and culture are not excluded.” para.82, 43.

⁴¹⁴ J. Michael Joncas, “Ritual Transformations: Principles, Patterns, and Peoples.” in *Toward Ritual Transformation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 65-66.

⁴¹⁵ In his sample ritual, Fink includes a communal washing of hands (lavabo), similar to the ritual the priest performs before the Eucharistic Prayer. He writes, “All in the assembly come forward, wash their hands in water that has been blessed and return to their places. During this ritual washing, an appropriate song or psalm, such as Ps. 51, may be sung.” Peter E. Fink, “Alternative 3,” 135.

⁴¹⁶ One of the drawbacks for including such a ritual washing of hands is that this ritual action has unfortunate biblical connotations, such as Pilate washing his hands at the eventual fate of Jesus (Cf. Matthew 27: 24). A washing of hands in this case is not an absolution of guilt, but a gesture of new life in the cleansing waters of baptism. To highlight this, blessed water for the ritual washing of hands could also be taken from the baptismal font, and explanation of the intention of the ritual could be provided either in written or spoken form.

An act of contrition and prayer of absolution could help to foster an awareness of the reality of social sin and its damaging effects on the worshipping community (see 4.2.3.4). As recommended in the RP, the use of symbol in the act of contrition could be quite effective.⁴¹⁷ The use of candles lit from the Easter paschal candle and placed on the altar in the Service of Solidarity would not be liturgically appropriate for the celebration of this liturgy in the Lenten season, although it could be utilised in an Easter celebration of this liturgy (see 4.4.1). However the use of symbols appropriate to the Lenten season could be effective in the act of contrition. For example, in the papal purification of memory ritual, sentiments of contrition were highlighted to great effect by Pope John Paul II embracing and kissing the crucifix after the seven petitions of confession for social sin were announced.⁴¹⁸ Similarly in this liturgy, the clergy of the diocese (and other stakeholders involved in the social sin) could each kiss the crucifix as an appropriate act of contrition after each of the intercessions is announced (as outlined in 5.2.1).⁴¹⁹

It is important that the act of contrition ends with the prayer of absolution (see 4.2.3.4). The fact that the prayer of absolution in the act of contrition is not sacramental (though it is effective at least in terms of absolving venial sins) is largely academic in a liturgy of this kind.⁴²⁰ This prayer of absolution still remains the closest approximation to an absolution outside of the Sacrament of Penance that currently exists in the liturgical practice of the Catholic Church. Enrico Mazza rightly points out: “It is still a liturgical rite: If a person is truly contrite and converted in God’s sight, and if the entire

⁴¹⁷ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.51(f), 137.

⁴¹⁸ Vatican Basilica, “Universal Prayer”, 12 March, 2000.

⁴¹⁹ Kissing the crucifix, or the ‘Veneration of the Cross,’ forms an integral part of the Good Friday liturgy.

⁴²⁰ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.52(g), 138.

hierarchically organised assembly asks God to forgive, it is not possible to think and act as if nothing has happened.”⁴²¹ In the light of sexual abuse, a prayer of absolution could certainly be considered as a prayer directed to God asking for the grace of *metanoia*.⁴²²

The prayer of thanksgiving used in PC’s for the sick (see 4.2.3.5) is also appropriate for use in this proposed PC. This prayer, directed to God the Father, contains three petitions: the first is a prayer for forgiveness for those who are present in the assembly and have publicly expressed their contrition for the harm they may have caused or contributed to (appropriate for the clergy participating in the liturgy);⁴²³ the second is a prayer for those who still suffer hardship and pain (appropriate for the many survivors who still carry the scars of abuse) that they may be able to join their sufferings with the sufferings of Christ;⁴²⁴ and the third is a prayer for those who are troubled or still in sorrow (appropriate for those who have not as yet found forgiveness in their hearts) that they will receive ‘salvation’ (i.e. healing).⁴²⁵ The response to each prayer of thanksgiving is: “We praise you and thank you.”⁴²⁶ The final prayer of the liturgy could be taken from the PC for Sin and Conversion which, like the opening prayer, is a prayer addressed directly to

⁴²¹ Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 264.

⁴²² Mattam notes: “The concern here is not the ‘absolution’ by the priest, but that Christians be given a chance to become aware of their sinfulness, their lack of response to God’s love and to make decisions in favour of the way they ought to live.” J. Mattam, “The Sacrament of Reconciliation.” *African Ecclesial Review* 34, no.5 (October, 1992): 319.

⁴²³ The prayer reads: “God of consolation and Father of mercies, you forgive the sinner who acknowledges his guilt.” The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.71, 143.

⁴²⁴ The prayer reads: “God of consolation and Father of mercies, you give to those who suffer hardship or pain a share in the sufferings of your Son for the salvation of the world.” Ibid.

⁴²⁵ The prayer reads: “God of consolation and Father of mercies, you look with love on those who are troubled or in sorrow; you give them hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life.” Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

Christ asking that Peter's example of repentance be applied to those participating in the liturgy.⁴²⁷

5.4.1.4 Concluding Rites

The concluding rites in this proposed PC would consist of: blessing, dismissal and closing hymn (see Table 5.4). These rites would proceed according to the ritual as outlined in 4.2.4. Any of the appropriate Lenten hymns ordinarily used in the celebration of the Mass would be appropriate for a liturgy of this kind.

5.5 Summary

PC's are indispensable elements in the armoury of the Church's existing penitential discipline precisely because they can lead to the more fruitful celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Bishop William Bullock of the diocese of Des Moines, Iowa writes: "Such services may be tailored to the needs or experiences of reconciliation within communities and further enrich the sacramental celebration of reconciliation."⁴²⁸ Those who choose to participate in a PC of this sort at the beginning of the Lenten season could, as a result of the liturgy, feel personally complicit in the social sin. For these penitents, forgiveness through sacramental absolution can always be sought at a later time through the Sacrament of Penance. Utilising a PC for the forgiveness of social sin at the beginning of the Lenten period could serve as an effective complement to the Rite 2 sacramental celebrations typically held in Australian parishes towards the end of the Lenten season. PC's can thus serve as effective tools in the formation of conscience

⁴²⁷ The prayer reads: "Lord Jesus, our Saviour, you called Peter to be an apostle; when he repented of his sin you restored him to your friendship and confirmed him as first of the apostles. Turn to us with love and help us to imitate Peter's example. Give us strength to turn from our sins and to serve you in the future with greater love and devotion, for you live and reign forever and ever. Amen." *Ibid.*, para.30 (f), 130-131.

⁴²⁸ *Origins*, 19, no.38 (February 22, 1990): 627.

regarding the personal dimensions of social sin. As we saw in Chapter 2, the personal dimensions of social sin can never be disregarded.⁴²⁹

The Sacrament of Penance caters effectively for those individual stakeholders who may be personally complicit in social sin (i.e. those who may have personally caused harm). However, it is sometimes difficult (if not impossible) to attend sacramentally to the wounds of all of the community stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by social sin. Catherine Vinci poses some important questions in this regard, asking:

What of those situations where a one-to-one encounter between victim and victimizer is not possible for reasons of time, place or psychological factors? What of the experiences of injustice where the agents of violence are faceless structures or generations long dead who shaped patterns of violence through indifference, bias or blatant hostility? What kinds of reconciliation are needed in those situations, and who are the agents of that kind of reconciliation?⁴³⁰

The existing sacramental rites simply do not make provision for all those affected by social sin. Grigassy notes: "Those who stand at the receiving end of sin, those suffering from the direct oppression of sin, whether individual or communal, remain invisible in the *Ordo Paenitentiae*. No prayers are said over them, no hands laid on them, no blessing offered them."⁴³¹

Many participating in a PC for the ritual acknowledgement of social sin (such as those who may attend this proposed PC) may have no desire to access the Sacrament of Penance, but a strong desire to be involved in a penitential liturgy fostering community reconciliation, awareness, mutual

⁴²⁹ See R et P, para.59. The personal dimension of social sin was strongly reinforced by Pope John Paul II in R et P.

⁴³⁰ Catherine Vinci, "Reconciliation for the Victim." *Liturgy* 9, no.4 (Washington D.C: Liturgical Conference, 1991): 35-41.

⁴³¹ Grigassy, "Nonsacramental Rites of Reconciliation," 16.

acknowledgement, understanding, compassion and healing. PC's offer liturgical rites that can, if used effectively, increase the community awareness of social sin. Without effective liturgical strategies in place, social sin can go by largely unnoticed.⁴³² PC's can also begin the delicate process of healing for communities wounded by social sin. We saw a very good example of the beginnings of community healing and reconciliation in the Service of Solidarity (see 5.3).

This chapter has shown the pastoral flexibility of the PC in response to the blight of clergy sexual abuse. This is but one pastoral example which illustrates the need for new liturgical rites, outside of the Sacrament of Penance, which address all of the community stakeholders involved in social sin (not just those who may have caused harm). If PC's are to play a more significant role in the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin, then there are some deeper theological issues that will need to be addressed in order to allow them to be conceived of appropriately as a supplement to the Church's sacramental practice, and understood in a fruitful and life-giving manner. Chapter 6 will outline some of the more salient points of theological discussion, along with suggested avenues for future reflection and development.

⁴³² Fink and Woods comment: "People fall through the 'cracks' in institutions. People can be radically harmed by institutions. It would be nice to imagine a way in which institutions can acknowledge such responsibility, and seek forgiveness of the individual so harmed." Peter E. Fink and Denis J. Woods, "Alternative 4: Liturgy for the Reconciliation of Groups." in Fink, Peter E, ed., *Reconciliation. Alternative Futures for Worship. vol. 4.* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 163-164.

CHAPTER 6

Theological Reflections

Critical theological reflection on liturgical rites is the task of the discipline of liturgical theology. Kavanagh regards theological reflection on the liturgical rites of the Church as secondary acts of theology (*theologia secunda*).⁴³³

Secondary theology is not about engaging in theology for theology's own sake, but thoughtful reflection on ritual events which can then serve to shape and inform future experiences of similar ritual events. Any future directions the PC may take as a ritual for the recognition and forgiveness of social sin must be informed and guided by *theologia secunda*.

6.1 Sacramental versus Non-Sacramental Rites

Many of the tensions surrounding the use of sacramental and non-sacramental rites in the Australian Catholic Church reflect the theological debates that were occurring during the Second Vatican Council and in the intervening years between the close of the council and the promulgation of the *Rite of Penance*. The Second Vatican Council occurred at a time when many of the theological debates in the Catholic Church regarding the effects of the Sacrament of Penance were still being hotly debated. Some theologians believed that the primary effect of sacramental reconciliation was reconciliation of the individual with God, a theology that dominated the Tridentine understanding of sin and reconciliation. Other theologians argued

⁴³³ Kavanagh writes: "For if theology as a whole is critical reflection upon the communion between God and our race, the peculiarly graced representative and servant of cosmic order created by God and restored in Christ, then scrutiny of the precise point at which this communion is most overtly deliberated upon and celebrated by us under God's judgement and in God's presence would seem to be crucial to the whole enterprise. If this be true, then the professional liturgical theologian, whose task it is to articulate foundational faith as fully as possible and relate it to the array of secondary theological disciplines, bears a heavy responsibility both to his or her colleagues in worship and to *theologia secunda* in all its aspects." Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 78.

that the primary effect of sacramental reconciliation was reconciliation of the individual with the Church, a more contemporary approach.⁴³⁴ Dallen explains: "At the time of the Council this theological view was still not a matter of consensus. Consequently, the Council took no position on the debated issue. But it did call for a reform that would clearly express the social and ecclesial character and effects of the sacrament. The two effects: reconciliation with God and reconciliation with the Church, were put side-by-side, with no indication of priority."⁴³⁵

The RP reflects this theological compromise and represents an awkward blend of both approaches, although it tends to favour the position that the Sacrament of Penance primarily effects reconciliation of the individual with God. The RP states: "The ultimate purpose of penance is that we should love God deeply and commit ourselves completely to him."⁴³⁶ Chapter 1 illustrated that the RP does include new rites which express a more contemporary theology of reconciliation (Rites 2 and 3). However Chapter 2 showed that these rites still rely heavily on the older Tridentine rite (Rite 1). This theological stance does not easily accommodate a contemporary theology of social sin. Social sin primarily affects the community of believers as a whole and therefore demands new liturgical rites that can be celebrated

⁴³⁴ See Clarence McAuliffe, "Penance and Reconciliation with the Church." *Theological Studies* 26, no.1 (March, 1965): 1. McAuliffe traces the beginnings of a sacramental theology which stressed the effect of the Sacrament of Penance as reconciliation with the Church to the writings of Bartolome Xiberta in the year 1922. He holds that this theological view has now been accepted by leading theologians like de la Taille, Mersch, de Lubac, Schmaus, Schillebeeckx, Leeming and Rahner.

The ITC has officially taken up a theology of the Sacrament of Penance that effects reconciliation with the Church when it writes: "In sacramental penance the readmission to full sacramental Communion with the Church is the sacramental sign (*res et sacramentum*) of the renewed communion with God (*res sacramenti*). The essence of this sacrament, therefore, consists in the fact that the reconciliation of the sinner with God takes place by the reconciliation with the Church." International Theological Commission: *Texts and Documents*, 1969-1985, Michael Sharkey., ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 234-236.

⁴³⁵ Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," 397.

⁴³⁶ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.5, 5-6.

in and amongst the community of believers as a whole, in order to reflect a contemporary theology of reconciliation with the Church.⁴³⁷

Theological tensions in the RP are also evident in the peculiar way that it includes the possibility for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance within the context of the non-sacramental PC.⁴³⁸ In particular, the RP puzzlingly suggests the use of Rite 2 or Rite 3 in the PC where permitted by law.⁴³⁹ The use of Rite 3 in Australia is now limited to those extraordinary cases spelt out in *The Code of Canon Law* which stipulates that general absolution, without prior individual confession, cannot be given to a number of penitents together unless danger of death threatens,⁴⁴⁰ or unless there exists a grave necessity.⁴⁴¹ Furthermore, the penitent is still obliged to be individually absolved (Rite 1) for all known grave (mortal) sins, even after having been communally absolved.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Dallen observes: "Today it would be difficult to find a scholar of note who does not hold that, in this sacrament, reconciliation with God takes place through reconciliation with the Church. It is not enough to say that the sacrament of penance and reconciliation has a communal and ecclesial dimension. In it sinners' experience is opened to the reconciliation established by God in Christ. But this happens through reconciliation with the Church: the reality of God's forgiveness and the reality of the reconciliation with God is recognised only through the experience of being graciously accepted by the worshipping community and of accepting that community. As in baptism and in eucharist, so in this sacrament: community is the symbol of salvation." Dallen, "Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance," 399-400.

⁴³⁸ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.4, 119.

⁴³⁹ The RP states: "When the sacrament of penance is celebrated in these services, it follows the readings and homily, and the rite of reconciling several penitents with individual confession and absolution is used (Rite 2); when permitted by law, the rite for general confession and absolution is used (Rite 3)." Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ *The Code of Canon Law*, #961 (1), 219.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., #961 (2).

⁴⁴² Ibid., #963. The conclusion one could draw here is that the Church is still somewhat wary and mistrustful of abuses through general absolution which somehow let the penitent 'off the hook' in terms of having to individually confess their sins, even though their sins have been sacramentally absolved. Pastoral evidence however does not support this view. Stenzel writes: "Nothing in my experience supports contentions that grave sinners are sneaking in under the wire or getting by without meeting the Church's requirements for the forgiveness of sin. Rather, sinners have been more open to experiences of individual confessions by the grace of communal services with general absolution." Willian Stenzel, "It Would be a Sin to Lose General Absolution." *U.S. Catholic* 68, issue.1 (January, 2003): 26-27.

The RP's suggestion for the use of Rites 2 and 3 within the PC is all the more remarkable given the fact that the RP goes to great lengths to ensure that there is no confusion in the minds of the faithful as to the difference between the non-sacramental PC and the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.⁴⁴³ Although used frequently in Australia as distinct sacramental rites, Rites 2 and 3 have never been used within the context of the PC (to the best of the author's knowledge). However, in the years immediately following the promulgation of the RP, such an ambiguous theology caused confusion in the minds of clergy and faithful alike. Robert Gay expresses this sense of bewilderment in relation to the use of Rite 3 in the PC:

Wherever a priest can be present at such Penitential Celebrations, it is foreseen that they can include the general absolution of the penitents. The ritual specifies that the Bishops will adjust the norms according to the agreements of their respective Episcopal Conferences (Canon 961 and Ritual no.27). Certainly here abuses are possible. But, out of fear of abuse, must the Church abstain from using her full sacramental power for the remission of sins? Do we make sufficient use of the guidelines in the ritual? And as regards the value of this general absolution, must we really insist, there where the thing is practically impossible, on the necessity of the subsequent individual absolution? For the theoretician, the distinction between grave fault and what is not grave is clear enough. But for the penitent this is liable to disturb instead of appeasing him. That which ought to favour reconciliation becomes an obstacle to it.⁴⁴⁴

In the years since the promulgation of the RP, the Catholic Church has had to issue statements in order to clarify the Church's official position. Chapter 1 discussed the *Statement of Conclusions* which has severely curtailed the previously licit use of Rite 3 in Australia. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has also issued certain

⁴⁴³ See The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.37, 16; para.1, 119.

⁴⁴⁴ Robert Gay, "The Ecclesial Value of Penitential Celebrations." *African Ecclesial Review* 26 (June, 1984): 149.

directions in their *Circular Letter Concerning the Integrity of the Sacrament of Penance* regarding the use of sacramental absolution in PC's. The Congregation writes:

Penitential Celebrations may not make use of the sacramental formula of absolution, nor should they employ the concluding formula from the Penitential Rite at Mass, nor any other formula which could be misconstrued to be an absolution from sin. Nor may they be integrated into the celebration of the Mass. Such abuses run the risk of creating confusion in the minds of the faithful as to whether a sacramental absolution may or may not have taken place.⁴⁴⁵

This official position only serves to reinforce a Tridentine sacramental theology which favours individual sacramental confession and absolution. Detisch suggests that by holding on to this Tridentine sacramental theology, the Catholic Church is guilty of violating its own principle that the law of worship founds (or should found) the law of belief (*lex orandi - lex credendi*).⁴⁴⁶ Dallen believes that the Catholic Church needs to find new ways to untether its sacramental theology from a Tridentine theology that exalts personal contrition and confession over contemporary liturgical celebrations that express a different experience of worship (such as the use of PC's for the forgiveness of social sin). Dallen comments:

The gap between sacramental liturgy and classical sacramental theology thus needs to be overcome. Can a sacramental Church be satisfied simply with encouraging perfect contrition when sufficient confessors are not available, even if (non-sacramental) Penitential

⁴⁴⁵ The Congregation for Divine Worship, *Circular Letter*, para.7-8.

⁴⁴⁶ Detisch writes: "The crisis with the Sacrament of Reconciliation consists in the Church's failure to liturgically embody the more developed theology of reconciliation it teaches. The Church is violating its own principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*: letting private encounters with confessors be the almost exclusive ritual embodiment of God's offer of reconciliation which does not reflect fully the belief that reconciliation is offered in and through the whole Church. Those private moments are certainly valuable and sacred but within a larger ritual context that includes a reconciling community." Detisch, "*The Sacrament of Reconciliation*," 206-207.

Celebrations are used to express the ecclesial dimension of this contrition? Systematic theologians need to give sustained attention to the nature and concept of sacrament and not measure reality by categories derived from an altogether different experience of sacramental worship.⁴⁴⁷

The prevailing Tridentine sacramental theology of the Catholic Church is seriously challenged by contemporary theological issues like social sin and in many cases is left wanting. Elich expresses some of the shortcomings in our current sacramental theology when he asks:

How do we express in our ties the corporate, communal reality of reconciliation? Now that we have discovered the communal dimension of personal forgiveness, can we, on occasion, take it a step further and place the ecclesial reality in the foreground of the sacramental act, speaking instead of the personal dimension of communal forgiveness?⁴⁴⁸

Elich's call for the sacramental rites to begin to address social sin represents a serious challenge to the existing sacramental theology of the Church. Indeed, PC's may even hold the key for the future development of new sacramental rites. Dallen remarks: "New forms of the sacrament are more likely to grow out of Penitential Celebrations than out of the three officially sacramental forms."⁴⁴⁹ The potential for new sacramental rites specifically devoted to social sin to develop out of the PC is a question now open to theological debate (although beyond the scope of this dissertation).

6.2 Rituals of Forgiveness

The three current *sacramental* Rites of Reconciliation (Rites 1, 2 and 3) convey the forgiveness of God for personal sin through ritual. Chapter 3 concluded

⁴⁴⁷ Dallen, *The Reconciling Community*, 398.

⁴⁴⁸ Elich, *Quarterly Bulletin*, 2.

⁴⁴⁹ Dallen, *The Reconciling Community*, 390.

that all four ritual elements comprising the Sacrament of Penance (contrition, confession, acts of penance and absolution) were not present definitively in any of the group apologies for social sin studied in this dissertation. Yet these non-sacramental rituals arguably still effected real reconciliation (or at least represented significant steps toward achieving reconciliation) among many of those who participated in them. Chapter 4 illustrated the PC as a non-sacramental rite and Chapter 5 demonstrated how the ritual elements of the PC can be fashioned to cater for social sin. Can the PC as a distinct *non-sacramental* rite go one step further and convey the forgiveness of God for the damaging effects of social sin through ritual?

In traditional Catholic sacramental theology, contrition is a necessary personal predisposition for the forgiveness of sins. The sacramental theology of the Middle Ages gave rise to the concept of contrition as the interior repentance of the individual, the central plank (*res et sacramentum*) of the Sacrament of Penance.⁴⁵⁰ The Council of Trent adopted this theology in its treatment of contrition in the Sacrament of Penance, describing contrition as holding the “first place” among the acts of the penitent.⁴⁵¹ This scholastic theology is reinforced in the RP which describes the ritual element of contrition as: “The most important act of the penitent, which is heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more. We can only approach the kingdom of Christ by *metanoia*.”⁴⁵² Scholastic theologians also made the distinction between perfect

⁴⁵⁰ Dallen writes: “Since the Middle Ages, theologians had focused on the individual in the sacrament. Most of them, like Aquinas, saw contrition as the way the individual experienced God’s forgiveness. To use the scholastic term, this interior repentance was the *res et sacramentum* – the first thing that happens as a consequence of a wholehearted participation in the sacramental liturgy and the way that God’s compassionate love shows itself to us in a way that we can experience.” Dallen, “Reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance,” 397.

⁴⁵¹ See Neuner & Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith*, para.1622, 629.

⁴⁵² The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.6(a), 6.

and imperfect contrition (attrition).⁴⁵³ For the scholastics, mortal and venial sins can be forgiven within the Sacrament of Penance by virtue of the sacrament itself (*ex opere operato*), requiring only the imperfect contrition of the penitent. Outside of the Sacrament of Penance venial sins can still be forgiven, but this forgiveness requires the perfect contrition of the penitent (*ex opere operantis*).⁴⁵⁴

Contrition holds a central place in the PC which is designed to: “help the community and each person to a true awareness of sin and heartfelt sorrow, in other words, to bring about conversion of life (*metanoia*).”⁴⁵⁵ Coffey supports the traditional scholastic argument in favour of the forgiveness of sins in Penitential Celebrations *ex opere operantis*. Coffey writes: “This is not to deny that sins are forgiven in penitential services. However, they are not forgiven through the service, but through the dispositions of the participants. Penitential services mediate grace not *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis*.”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Martos explains: “The scholastics recognised that feelings of sorrow for having sinned could be motivated either by a fear of divine punishment or by a realisation that sin had no place in the heart of someone who loved God. The former they named imperfect contrition since it did not necessarily change a person’s behaviour... The latter was named perfect contrition, and it designated a depth of repentance which so changed people’s outlook on life that they resolved never to sin again.... Aquinas’ integrated approach to penance made him insist that contrition was needed for the sacrament to be truly effective. In other words, contrition was necessary part of the ‘matter’ of the sacrament; without it the ritual would be a mere formality effecting no real remission of sins. Moreover, the sorrow for sin had to be perfect contrition.” Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 298, 300.

St Thomas Aquinas deals with the question of contrition in *The Summa Theologica of St Thomas Aquinas*, Complete Edition in Three Volumes. (London: Burns & Oates, 1947), vol. III, q.1-5, 2573-2586.

⁴⁵⁴ Reflecting on the theology of St Thomas Aquinas, Coffey writes: “One thing Aquinas was doing, however, was guaranteeing that, at least in the case of a person with attrition, their sins were forgiven through the sacrament (*ex opere operato*). For him, a person with perfect contrition was forgiven (*ex opere operantis*) before the reception of the sacrament. Here we should recall that, unlike his contemporaries, Aquinas did not lose sight of the fact that only the sacrament reconciled the sinner to the Church.” Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 162.

⁴⁵⁵ The Roman Ritual, *Rite of Penance*, para.36, 16.

⁴⁵⁶ Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 158.

Establishing whether or not perfect contrition for social sin can occur at the group level can be problematic. Chapter 3 revealed that group apologies for social sin often rely on the expression of collective contrition, even though this contrition may not be shared fully by all in the group responsible for the social sin (see 3.5). Rahner argues that PC's are liturgical rites that can convey the grace of forgiveness regardless of the contrition shown by the penitent(s). He maintains that the question as to whether or not perfect contrition can be shown in contemporary sacramental theology is largely academic. Rahner writes:

The distinction, often made in regard to this question in scholastic theology and heard also in the Council of Trent, between "perfect" and "imperfect" contrition is basically of no consequence for the question of the certainty of forgiveness, since, when imperfect contrition is truly present, existentially there is no longer any problem about perfect contrition, which supervenes of itself. The reason is that the difficulty about perfect contrition is (precisely) imperfect contrition. Without the latter, no forgiveness at all is possible.⁴⁵⁷

Rahner concludes:

In a sober theological treatment one would have to be careful in maintaining that such a remission of sins is 'surer' in the sacrament than outside it where it happens merely '*ex opere operantis*'. For, given the corresponding necessary personal disposition, then it is possible to have the certainty (of forgiveness of sin) even outside the sacrament which can be attained in the sacrament, because the success even of the sacrament depends on this disposition.⁴⁵⁸

Rahner argues further that sins can indeed be forgiven in the Penitential Celebration, despite its non-sacramental status. He suggests that when a PC

⁴⁵⁷ Karl Rahner, "Penitential Services and Individual Confession: Observations on the Roman Decree on the Sacrament of Penance." (1972) as quoted in Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 161.

⁴⁵⁸ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol.2 "Man in the Church." (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 163.

is celebrated amidst a faith-filled assembly and presided over by an ordained minister of the Church, the prayers of forgiveness uttered in the liturgical rites are sacramentally efficacious in and of themselves (*ex opere operato*) and not merely through the personal dispositions of the penitents (*ex opere operantis*). Rahner contends:

Now when a priest, on the occasion of a penitential service of the repentant community, and in the exercise of his ecclesial-spiritual function in regard to this community, expressly announces in all seriousness the forgiveness of God, which in any case transpires in the depths of the conscience, and when he really intends his words as seriously as they are uttered and as they in any case manifest the certainly vouchsafed grace-event in the public forum of the Church, can he at all prevent his words from being sacramental? I mean, in so far as one said that his words lacked sacramental character because he did not intend, nor was entitled, to utter words that were sacramentally effective, one would, in the concrete situation in which they are nevertheless uttered, rob these words of any serious meaning in a human or Christian sense.⁴⁵⁹

In theological discourse therefore it must be considered that the forgiveness of God can be received just as efficaciously outside of the Sacrament of Penance as it is received within the Sacrament of Penance. Indeed, our ability to receive the forgiveness of God outside of the Sacrament of Penance is recognised in the sacramental theology of St Thomas Aquinas. Eric Luijten notes:

According to Thomas, God is not bound to the use of sacraments in order to confer justifying grace. Thomas distinguishes between penance as sacrament and penance as virtue. Of these, the virtue of penance is indispensable with respect to the forgiveness of actual mortal sin. Thomas says that God can forgive sins without the sacrament of penance, i.e. without the ministry of a priest who binds

⁴⁵⁹ Karl Rahner, "Bußandacht und Einzelbichte: Anmerkungen zum römischen Erlass über das Bußsakrament," in *Stimmen der Zeit* 190 (1972): 363-72, at 370-71, as quoted in Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 157.

and loosens. The necessity of the sacrament of penance for those who have committed a mortal sin refers to us and not to God.⁴⁶⁰

The PC is a non-sacramental liturgy with the potential to mediate the forgiveness and reconciliation of God through ritual. Coffey writes: “When we say that penitential services are non-sacramental, we are denying them the status accruing to the seven sacraments of the Church, and specifically to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We do not deny, indeed we affirm, that they are sacramental in a broad sense of the term, in that they mediate grace through ritual.”⁴⁶¹ The road to reconciliation for social sin at the group level can be promoted and supported by the appropriate use of non-sacramental liturgical rites, such as those outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. In utilising PC’s for the forgiveness of social sin, sacramental absolution is not necessarily the be-all and end-all of the discussion. This is not to downplay the importance of the Sacrament of Penance, but to recognise that forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be confined solely to forms of sacramental expression.⁴⁶²

The Catholic sacramental mindset has for too long regarded the seven sacraments of the Church as being more efficacious than other forms of liturgical expression. For example, in the Australian Catholic Church a heavy reliance on the use of Rite 3 in recent years has stifled other liturgical forms that have been largely overlooked (such as the PC). Gerard Moore writes: “An overly sacramental focus has placed a large burden on the third rite, seen to be a consistently and authentically communal rite. At the same time,

⁴⁶⁰ Eric Luijten, *Sacramental Forgiveness as a Gift of God: Thomas Aquinas on the Sacrament of Penance*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 146-147.

For Aquinas’ original thoughts see *The Summa Theologica*, vol. II, q.86, a.2, 2545-2546.

⁴⁶¹ Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 153-154.

⁴⁶² The CCC recognises this when it writes on the Sacrament of Baptism: “God has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.” para.1257, 320.

this exclusively sacramental mindset has left unexplored the potential of Penitential Services (Appendix II)."⁴⁶³ The PC can thus act as an important counter-balance to traditional Catholic thinking which has tended to treat non-sacramental liturgies as less efficacious in mediating forgiveness and reconciliation than their sacramental counterparts. It is theologically feasible to argue that the PC conceivably could be called a ritual for the forgiveness of social sin, even though it is not strictly a sacramental rite.

6.3 Mortal and Venial Sin

The traditional terms mortal and venial sin (see 4.2.3.4) tend to reinforce a personal view of sin that struggles to accommodate a contemporary category of sins designated as social. Curran writes: "In the past, moral theology distorted the concept of mortal sin by understanding sin primarily in terms of an external act, thereby viewing sin more as a thing than as a relationship... to say nothing of its social and cosmic dimension."⁴⁶⁴ A growing number of theologians believe that there is now a pressing need for the traditional categories of 'mortal' and 'venial' sin to be reassessed theologically. Coffey is one who believes that the traditional categories of mortal and venial in sacramental theology do not adequately reflect the contemporary reality and experience of sin. Coffey writes:

Despite their long presence in the language of Catholic faith the terms 'mortal' and 'venial' as characterising, respectively, grave and non-grave sin are far from ideal: they only complicate what is already a difficult situation in both doctrine and theology... Original sin, social sin, and personal sins that do not destroy grace and charity are all truly sin, but only by analogy with grave personal sin... My suggestion, therefore, for distinguishing sins according to gravity is as follows. Sins are divided into grave and non-grave; and non-grave

⁴⁶³ Gerard Moore, "The Forgiveness of Sins: A Ritual History." *Australasian Catholic Record* 77, no.1 (January, 2000): 18.

⁴⁶⁴ Curran, "The Sacrament of Penance Today I," 522.

sins in turn are divided into mitigated and light... These terms are accurate and clear.⁴⁶⁵

Curran argues further for a change in the terminology of sin in Catholic sacramental theology, preferring designations which are focussed on the quality of human relationships. Curran believes that the answer lies in replacing the terms 'mortal' and 'venial' with 'fundamental option' and 'fundamental relationship,' stating:

Once sin is viewed in terms of the fundamental relationship between the person and God, which consists primarily in a basic orientation and not in individual actions, then even the presumptive nature of the older approach (i.e. mortal and venial sin) no longer retains great value or usefulness.⁴⁶⁶

Curran's suggestion effectively shifts the focus away from sin as an external act (i.e. something which is committed) and opens the sacramental theology of the Church to a wider and deeper appreciation of the social dimensions of sin at work in the world. Curran speaks of the many social implications of sin when he observes:

Poverty, war, discrimination, institutional violence – these are all among the many sacraments of sin existing in our world. How easy it is for the contemporary Christian to forget the existence of sin... The inequities of our world, the fact that rich people and nations exploit poor people and nations, the will for power and the subjection of the weak and failure of men to accept their responsibilities for the world and others are all signs of the reality of sin. The social, political, cultural, economic and even religious aspects of our human existence all contain elements that show forth the failure of men to live the gospel message of love of God and neighbour.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 12-14.

⁴⁶⁶ Curran, "The Sacrament of Penance Today I," 524.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 529-530.

A change in the nomenclature of sin in Catholic sacramental theology has the potential to focus attention away from the purely personal manifestations of sin and to recognise the effects of sin on interpersonal relationships and social structures. This change in terminology may also assist in the development of new liturgical rites for the recognition and forgiveness of social sin, such as that proposed in Chapter 5 of this paper.

6.4 Summary

The arguments posed in this chapter illustrate some of the many complex theological issues that still need to be resolved if Penitential Celebrations are to play a more central role in the penitential practice of the Catholic Church as it strives to mediate the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin. Many of these issues stem largely from an antiquated theology inherited from the Middle Ages which struggles to integrate contemporary theological concepts like social sin. In the current sacramental theology of the Church there are medieval overtones that are more about judgement and confession than reconciliation and forgiveness. Favazza comments:

If a new paradigm for reconciliation is to emerge, can we speak an honest word in the face of our judgement-laden tradition? Is it really possible to be communities that extend an unconditional reconciling embrace while at the same time upholding the present juridical requirements of the institutional Church?⁴⁶⁸

The task of *theologia secunda* is therefore vital if the *theologia prima* found in the Penitential Celebration as a ritual for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin is to be better understood and celebrated in the life of the Australian Catholic Church.

⁴⁶⁸ Joseph A. Favazza, "Forum: The Fragile Future of Reconciliation." *Worship* 71, no.3 (May, 1997): 243-244.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church finds itself at an important crossroad in the recognition of both the reality and the damaging effects of social sin. The recognition of social sin in the liturgical rites of the Church is critical if these rites are to be celebrated and experienced meaningfully in the contemporary world. Social sin is a contemporary category of sin that has only recently evolved. Over the last several decades the acknowledgement of social sin has become increasingly evident in the secular world, where we are beginning to see real advances in the use of group apologies. The national Australian apology to the Stolen Generations is one secular example where social sin was acknowledged in a ritualised way. In a similar vein, Pope John Paul II's *purification of memory* apology and Pope Benedict's apology to survivors of clergy sexual abuse in Australia also ritually acknowledged the reality of social sin in the ecclesial sense.

Recognition of social sin in the Church's liturgical rites is urgently needed to begin to bridge the gap between the increasing effectiveness of secular rituals of reconciliation on the one hand and the increasing demise of sacramental rituals of Reconciliation on the other. The aim of this dissertation has not been to show that Sacrament of Penance is irrelevant in the contemporary world. It is evident in the celebration and reception of the sacramental rites in the Australian Catholic Church that people are showing a preference for communal rites (Rites 2 and 3) over individual rites (Rite 1). However, there is currently no ritual recognition of social sin in the sacramental rites. This research has shown that the possibility for the ritual acknowledgement in the current sacramental rites is problematic. This is chiefly because the current sacramental theology of the Church is centred heavily (if not solely) on personal sin. Healing the wounds of communities torn apart by social sin demands a different ritual approach from

sacramental rites which have evolved to address personal sin. The possibility for the ritual acknowledgement of social sin in the current liturgical practice of the Catholic Church lies therefore in the development of non-sacramental rites.

The Penitential Celebration is an officially prescribed non-sacramental rite holding much potential for further development. The PC offers a flexible and pastorally adaptable liturgy capable of recognising and beginning to heal the damaging effects of social sin. Clergy sexual abuse in the Australian Church is one example (amongst others) where the PC could be used to great effect. The PC can be beneficial in arousing an awareness of social sin in the local community and assisting in the process of community healing. Forgiveness and reconciliation can be a life-long journey. The use of the PC for the ritual acknowledgement of social sin represents a crucial step in this journey, the climax of which is the ability to forgive and to be forgiven. Those who choose to participate in a PC for the ritual acknowledgement of social sin (such as that proposed in this paper) may be led in time to a deeper awareness of their personal involvement and complicity in social sin (i.e. for the part they may have played in the harm caused). These people can access the Sacrament of Penance to have these personal sins forgiven, if they so desire.

The history of the Sacrament of Penance reveals that the evolution of new models are often embraced by the Church-going faithful before they are embraced by the magisterium of the Church (i.e. they are every bit as much bottom-up as they are top-down).⁴⁶⁹ The faithful have often reacted positively to new models of reconciliation that allow an authentic encounter

⁴⁶⁹ Kavanagh writes: "Creeds, theories, texts and prayers all emerged from that dialectical process of change and adjustment to change triggered by the assembly's regular baptismal and Eucharistic encounters with the living God in its own faithful life, a life embracing saints and sinners alike." Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 92-93.

with the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, mediated in and through the Church. There is no reason to suggest that the evolution of new models which effectively address social sin should be any different. As noted above, there are some fundamental theological issues which still need to be considered if PC's are to be understood as highly appropriate rites for the liturgical acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin. Chief among these theological issues is a sacramental theology that remains tethered to an overly personalised experience of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Despite the Catholic Church still showing a theological preference for sacramental rites centred on personal sin, a theology which sets the foundation for dealing appropriately with social sin is slowly beginning to emerge, as seen in the papal *purification of memory* liturgy. The *purification of memory* liturgy set an important liturgical precedent for the ritual recognition of social sin which must be allowed to inform and illuminate the future penitential practices of the Catholic Church. The Church can and must respond to the reality of social sin by fully utilising the liturgical rites it already has at its disposal, such as the PC. Whether the future sacramental rites of the Church can be shaped to include the ritual acknowledgement of social sin certainly merits closer theological attention. However, this in no way detracts from the use of the PC as an effective non-sacramental complement to the sacramental rites.

The development of rituals for the acknowledgement and forgiveness of social sin represents a new phase in the theological evolution of the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church. The Penitential Celebration has much to offer in bringing the celebration and meaningful reception of these liturgical rites into the contemporary world.

APPENDICES

I. Pope John Paul II

'PURIFICATION OF MEMORY' LITURGY⁴⁷⁰

12 March 2000

Pope John Paul II:

Brothers and Sisters,
let us turn with trust to God our Father,
who is merciful and compassionate,
slow to anger, great in love and fidelity,
and ask him to accept the repentance of his people
who humbly confess their sins,
and to grant them mercy.

All pray for a moment in silence.

I. CONFESSION OF SINS IN GENERAL

Cardinal Gantin:

Let us pray that our confession and repentance
will be inspired by the Holy Spirit,
that our sorrow will be conscious and deep,
and that, humbly viewing the sins of the past
in an authentic "purification of memory",
we will be committed to the path of true conversion.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

Lord God,
your pilgrim Church,
which you ever sanctify in the blood of your Son,
counts among her children in every age
members whose holiness shines brightly forth

⁴⁷⁰ Website:

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_20000312_prayer-day-pardon_en.html (accessed March, 2008).

and members whose disobedience to you
contradicts the faith we profess and the Holy Gospel.
You, who remain ever faithful,
even when we are unfaithful,
forgive our sins
and grant that we may bear true witness to you
before all men and women.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.
R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

II. CONFESSION OF SINS COMMITTED IN THE SERVICE OF TRUTH

Cardinal Ratzinger:

Let us pray that each one of us,
looking to the Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
will recognize that even men of the Church,
in the name of faith and morals,
have sometimes used methods not in keeping with the Gospel
in the solemn duty of defending the truth.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

Lord, God of all men and women,
in certain periods of history
Christians have at times given in to intolerance
and have not been faithful to the great commandment of love,
sullyng in this way the face of the Church, your Spouse.
Have mercy on your sinful children
and accept our resolve
to seek and promote truth in the gentleness of charity,
in the firm knowledge that truth
can prevail only in virtue of truth itself.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

III. CONFESSION OF SINS WHICH HAVE HARMED THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Cardinal Etchegaray:

Let us pray that our recognition of the sins
which have rent the unity of the Body of Christ
and wounded fraternal charity
will facilitate the way to reconciliation
and communion among all Christians.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

Merciful Father,
on the night before his Passion
your Son prayed for the unity of those who believe in him:
in disobedience to his will, however,
believers have opposed one another, becoming divided,
and have mutually condemned one another and fought against one another.
We urgently implore your forgiveness
and we beseech the gift of a repentant heart,
so that all Christians, reconciled with you and with one another
will be able, in one body and in one spirit,
to experience anew the joy of full communion.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

IV. CONFESSION OF SINS AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Cardinal Cassidy:

Let us pray that, in recalling the sufferings
endured by the people of Israel throughout history,
Christians will acknowledge the sins

committed by not a few of their number
against the people of the Covenant and the blessings,
and in this way will purify their hearts.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

God of our fathers,
you chose Abraham and his descendants
to bring your Name to the Nations:
we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those
who in the course of history
have caused these children of yours to suffer,
and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves
to genuine brotherhood
with the people of the Covenant.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

**V. CONFESSION OF SINS COMMITTED IN ACTIONS AGAINST LOVE,
PEACE, THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLES, AND RESPECT FOR CULTURES
AND RELIGIONS**

Archbishop Hamao:

Let us pray that contemplating Jesus,
our Lord and our Peace,
Christians will be able to repent of the words and attitudes
caused by pride, by hatred,
by the desire to dominate others,
by enmity towards members of other religions
and towards the weakest groups in society,
such as immigrants and itinerants

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

Lord of the world, Father of all,
through your Son
you asked us to love our enemies,
to do good to those who hate us
and to pray for those who persecute us.
Yet Christians have often denied the Gospel;
yielding to a mentality of power,
they have violated the rights of ethnic groups and peoples,
and shown contempt for their cultures and religious traditions:
be patient and merciful towards us, and grant us your forgiveness!
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.
R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

VI. CONFESSION OF SINS AGAINST THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN AND THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

Cardinal Arinze:

Let us pray for all those who have suffered offences
against their human dignity and whose rights have been trampled;
let us pray for women, who are all too often humiliated and marginated,
and let us acknowledge the forms of acquiescence in these sins
of which Christians too have been guilty.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

Lord God, our Father,
you created the human being, man and woman,
in your image and likeness
and you willed the diversity of peoples
within the unity of the human family.
At times, however, the equality of your sons
and daughters has not been acknowledged,
and Christians have been guilty of attitudes
of rejection and exclusion,
consenting to acts of discrimination
on the basis of racial and ethnic differences.
Forgive us and grant us the grace to heal the wounds

still present in your community on account of sin,
so that we will all feel ourselves to be your sons and daughters.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

VII. CONFESSION OF SINS IN RELATION TO THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE PERSON

Archbishop Thuan:

Let us pray for all the men and women of the world,
especially for minors who are victims of abuse,
for the poor, the alienated, the disadvantaged;
let us pray for those who are most defenceless,
the unborn killed in their mother's womb
or even exploited for experimental purposes
by those who abuse
the promise of biotechnology
and distort the aims of science.

Silent prayer.

The Holy Father:

God, our Father,
you always bear the cry of the poor.
How many times have Christians themselves not recognized you
in the hungry, the thirsty and the naked,
in the persecuted, the imprisoned,
and in those incapable of defending themselves,
especially in the first stages of life.
For all those who have committed acts of injustice
by trusting in wealth and power
and showing contempt for the "little ones"
who are so dear to you, we ask your forgiveness:
have mercy on us and accept our repentance.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

R. Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison; Kyrie, eleison.

A lamp is lit before the Crucifix.

Concluding Prayer

The Holy Father:

Most merciful Father,
your Son, Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead,
in the humility of his first coming
redeemed humanity from sin
and in his glorious return he will demand an account of every sin.
Grant that our forebears, our brothers and sisters,
and we, your servants, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit
turn back to you in whole-hearted repentance,
may experience your mercy and receive
the forgiveness of our sins.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

*As a sign of penance and veneration the Holy Father embraces and kisses the
Crucifix.*

II. Prime Minister Rudd
APOLOGY TO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS⁴⁷¹

13 February 2008

The SPEAKER (Hon. Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 9 am and read prayers.

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (9.00 am)—I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

⁴⁷¹ Website: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/Rudd_Speech.pdf (accessed June, 2008).

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Mr Speaker, there comes a time in the history of nations when their peoples must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with confidence to embrace their future. Our nation, Australia, has reached such a time. That is why the parliament is today here assembled: to deal with this unfinished business of the nation, to remove a great stain from the nation's soul and, in a true spirit of reconciliation, to open a new chapter in the history of this great land, Australia.

Last year I made a commitment to the Australian people that if we formed the next government of the Commonwealth we would in parliament say

sorry to the Stolen Generations. Today I honour that commitment. I said we would do so early in the life of the new parliament. Again, today I honour that commitment by doing so at the commencement of this the 42nd parliament of the Commonwealth. Because the time has come, well and truly come, for all peoples of our great country, for all citizens of our great Commonwealth, for all Australians—those who are Indigenous and those who are not—to come together to reconcile and together build a new future for our nation.

Some have asked, 'Why apologise?' Let me begin to answer by telling the parliament just a little of one person's story—an elegant, eloquent and wonderful woman in her 80s, full of life, full of funny stories, despite what has happened in her life's journey, a woman who has travelled a long way to be with us today, a member of the stolen generation who shared some of her story with me when I called around to see her just a few days ago. Nanna Nungala Fejo, as she prefers to be called, was born in the late 1920s. She remembers her earliest childhood days living with her family and her community in a bush camp just outside Tennant Creek. She remembers the love and the warmth and the kinship of those days long ago, including traditional dancing around the camp fire at night. She loved the dancing. She remembers once getting into strife when, as a four-year-old girl, she insisted on dancing with the male tribal elders rather than just sitting and watching the men, as the girls were supposed to do.

But then, sometime around 1932, when she was about four, she remembers the coming of the welfare men. Her family had feared that day and had dug holes in the creek bank where the children could run and hide. What they had not expected was that the white welfare men did not come alone. They brought a truck, two white men and an Aboriginal stockman on horseback

cracking his stockwhip. The kids were found; they ran for their mothers, screaming, but they could not get away. They were herded and piled onto the back of the truck. Tears flowing, her mum tried clinging to the sides of the truck as her children were taken away to the Bungalow in Alice, all in the name of protection.

A few years later, government policy changed. Now the children would be handed over to the missions to be cared for by the Churches. But which Church would care for them? The kids were simply told to line up in three lines. Nanna Fejo and her sisters stood in the middle line, her older brother and cousin on her left. Those on the left were told that they had become Catholics, those in the middle Methodists and those on the right Church of England. That is how the complex questions of post-reformation theology were resolved in the Australian outback in the 1930s. It was as crude as that. She and her sister were sent to a Methodist mission on Goulburn Island and then Croker Island. Her Catholic brother was sent to work at a cattle station and her cousin to a Catholic mission. Nanna Fejo's family had been broken up for a second time. She stayed at the mission until after the war, when she was allowed to leave for a prearranged job as a domestic in Darwin. She was 16. Nanna Fejo never saw her mum again. After she left the mission, her brother let her know that her mum had died years before, a broken woman fretting for the children that had literally been ripped away from her.

I asked Nanna Fejo what she would have me say today about her story. She thought for a few moments then said that what I should say today was that all mothers are important. And she added: 'Families—keeping them together is very important. It's a good thing that you are surrounded by love and that love is passed down the generations. That's what gives you happiness.' As I left, later on, Nanna Fejo took one of my staff aside, wanting to make sure

that I was not too hard on the Aboriginal stockman who had hunted those kids down all those years ago. The stockman had found her again decades later, this time himself to say, 'Sorry.' And remarkably, extraordinarily, she had forgiven him.

Nanna Fejo's is just one story. There are thousands, tens of thousands, of them: stories of forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their mums and dads over the better part of a century. Some of these stories are graphically told in *Bringing them home*, the report commissioned in 1995 by Prime Minister Keating and received in 1997 by Prime Minister Howard. There is something terribly primal about these firsthand accounts. The pain is searing; it screams from the pages. The hurt, the humiliation, the degradation and the sheer brutality of the act of physically separating a mother from her children is a deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental humanity.

These stories cry out to be heard; they cry out for an apology. Instead, from the nation's parliament there has been a stony and stubborn and deafening silence for more than a decade; a view that somehow we, the parliament, should suspend our most basic instincts of what is right and what is wrong; a view that, instead, we should look for any pretext to push this great wrong to one side, to leave it languishing with the historians, the academics and the cultural warriors, as if the Stolen Generations are little more than an interesting sociological phenomenon. But the Stolen Generations are not intellectual curiosities. They are human beings; human beings who have been damaged deeply by the decisions of parliaments and governments. But, as of today, the time for denial, the time for delay, has at last come to an end.

The nation is demanding of its political leadership to take us forward. Decency, human decency, universal human decency, demands that the nation now step forward to right an historical wrong. That is what we are doing in this place today. But should there still be doubts as to why we must now act, let the parliament reflect for a moment on the following facts: that, between 1910 and 1970, between 10 and 30 per cent of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their mothers and fathers; that, as a result, up to 50,000 children were forcibly taken from their families; that this was the product of the deliberate, calculated policies of the state as reflected in the explicit powers given to them under statute; that this policy was taken to such extremes by some in administrative authority that the forced extractions of children of so-called 'mixed lineage' were seen as part of a broader policy of dealing with 'the problem of the Aboriginal population'.

One of the most notorious examples of this approach was from the Northern Territory Protector of Natives, who stated:

Generally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes—

to quote the Protector—

will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift submergence of their progeny in the white ...

The Western Australian Protector of Natives expressed not dissimilar views, expounding them at length in Canberra in 1937 at the first national conference on Indigenous affairs that brought together the Commonwealth and state protectors of natives. These are uncomfortable things to be brought out into the light. They are not pleasant. They are profoundly disturbing. But we must acknowledge these facts if we are to deal once and for all with the

argument that the policy of generic forced separation was somehow well motivated, justified by its historical context and, as a result, unworthy of any apology today.

Then we come to the argument of intergenerational responsibility, also used by some to argue against giving an apology today. But let us remember the fact that the forced removal of Aboriginal children was happening as late as the early 1970s. The 1970s is not exactly a point in remote antiquity. There are still serving members of this parliament who were first elected to this place in the early 1970s. It is well within the adult memory span of many of us. The uncomfortable truth for us all is that the parliaments of the nation, individually and collectively, enacted statutes and delegated authority under those statutes that made the forced removal of children on racial grounds fully lawful.

There is a further reason for an apology as well: it is that reconciliation is in fact an expression of a core value of our nation—and that value is a fair go for all. There is a deep and abiding belief in the Australian community that, for the Stolen Generations, there was no fair go at all. There is a pretty basic Aussie belief that says it is time to put right this most outrageous of wrongs. It is for these reasons, quite apart from concerns of fundamental human decency, that the governments and parliaments of this nation must make this apology—because, put simply, the laws that our parliaments enacted made the Stolen Generations possible. We, the parliaments of the nation, are ultimately responsible, not those who gave effect to our laws. The problem lay with the laws themselves. As has been said of settler societies elsewhere, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors, and therefore we must also be the bearer of their burdens as well.

Therefore, for our nation, the course of action is clear, and therefore, for our people, the course of action is clear: that is, to deal now with what has become one of the darkest chapters in Australia's history. In doing so, we are doing more than contending with the facts, the evidence and the often rancorous public debate. In doing so, we are also wrestling with our own soul. This is not, as some would argue, a black-armband view of history; it is just the truth: the cold, confronting, uncomfortable truth—facing it, dealing with it, moving on from it. Until we fully confront that truth, there will always be a shadow hanging over us and our future as a fully united and fully reconciled people. It is time to reconcile. It is time to recognise the injustices of the past. It is time to say sorry. It is time to move forward together.

To the Stolen Generations, I say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, I am sorry. I offer you this apology without qualification. We apologise for the hurt, the pain and suffering that we, the parliament, have caused you by the laws that previous parliaments have enacted. We apologise for the indignity, the degradation and the humiliation these laws embodied. We offer this apology to the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, the sisters, the families and the communities whose lives were ripped apart by the actions of successive governments under successive parliaments. In making this apology, I would also like to speak personally to the members of the Stolen Generations and their families: to those here today, so many of you; to those listening across the nation—from Yuendumu, in the central west of the Northern Territory, to Yabara, in North Queensland, and to Pitjantjatjara in South Australia.

I know that, in offering this apology on behalf of the government and the parliament, there is nothing I can say today that can take away the pain you have suffered personally. Whatever words I speak today, I cannot undo that. Words alone are not that powerful; grief is a very personal thing. I ask those non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important to imagine for a moment that this had happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us. Imagine the crippling effect. Imagine how hard it would be to forgive. My proposal is this: if the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it is offered, we can today resolve together that there be a new beginning for Australia. And it is to such a new beginning that I believe the nation is now calling us.

Australians are a passionate lot. We are also a very practical lot. For us, symbolism is important but, unless the great symbolism of reconciliation is accompanied by an even greater substance, it is little more than a clanging gong. It is not sentiment that makes history; it is our actions that make history.

Today's apology, however inadequate, is aimed at righting past wrongs. It is also aimed at building a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians—a bridge based on a real respect rather than a thinly veiled contempt. Our challenge for the future is to now cross that bridge and, in so doing, to embrace a new partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians—embracing, as part of that partnership, expanded Link-up and other critical services to help the Stolen Generations to trace their families if at all possible and to provide dignity to their lives. But the core of this partnership for the future is the closing of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians on life expectancy, educational

achievement and employment opportunities. This new partnership on closing the gap will set concrete targets for the future: within a decade to halve the widening gap in literacy, numeracy and employment outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians, within a decade to halve the appalling gap in infant mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and, within a generation, to close the equally appalling 17-year life gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in overall life expectancy.

The truth is, a business as usual approach towards Indigenous Australians is not working. Most old approaches are not working. We need a new beginning—a new beginning which contains real measures of policy success or policy failure; a new beginning, a new partnership, on closing the gap with sufficient flexibility not to insist on a one-size-fits-all approach for each of the hundreds of remote and regional Indigenous communities across the country but instead allowing flexible, tailored, local approaches to achieve commonly-agreed national objectives that lie at the core of our proposed new partnership; a new beginning that draws intelligently on the experiences of new policy settings across the nation. However, unless we as a parliament set a destination for the nation, we have no clear point to guide our policy, our programs or our purpose; we have no centralised organising principle.

Let us resolve today to begin with the little children—a fitting place to start on this day of apology for the Stolen Generations. Let us resolve over the next five years to have every Indigenous four-year-old in a remote Aboriginal community enrolled in and attending a proper early childhood education centre or opportunity and engaged in proper pre-literacy and pre-numeracy programs. Let us resolve to build new educational opportunities

for these little ones, year by year, step by step, following the completion of their crucial preschool year. Let us resolve to use this systematic approach to building future educational opportunities for Indigenous children and providing proper primary and preventative health care for the same children, to beginning the task of rolling back the obscenity that we find today in infant mortality rates in remote Indigenous communities—up to four times higher than in other communities.

None of this will be easy. Most of it will be hard—very hard. But none of it is impossible, and all of it is achievable with clear goals, clear thinking, and by placing an absolute premium on respect, cooperation and mutual responsibility as the guiding principles of this new partnership on closing the gap. The mood of the nation is for reconciliation now, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The mood of the nation on Indigenous policy and politics is now very simple. The nation is calling on us, the politicians, to move beyond our infantile bickering, our point-scoring and our mindlessly partisan politics and elevate this one core area of national responsibility to a rare position beyond the partisan divide. Surely this is the unfulfilled spirit of the 1967 referendum. Surely, at least from this day forward, we should give it a go.

Let me take this one step further, and take what some may see as a piece of political posturing and make a practical proposal to the opposition on this day, the first full sitting day of the new parliament. I said before the election that the nation needed a kind of war cabinet on parts of Indigenous policy, because the challenges are too great and the consequences too great to allow it all to become a political football, as it has been so often in the past. I therefore propose a joint policy commission, to be led by the Leader of the Opposition and me, with a mandate to develop and implement—to begin with—an effective housing strategy for remote communities over the next

five years. It will be consistent with the government's policy framework, a new partnership for closing the gap. If this commission operates well, I then propose that it work on the further task of constitutional recognition of the first Australians, consistent with the longstanding platform commitments of my party and the pre-election position of the opposition. This would probably be desirable in any event because, unless such a proposition were absolutely bipartisan, it would fail at a referendum. As I have said before, the time has come for new approaches to enduring problems. Working constructively together on such defined projects I believe would meet with the support of the nation. It is time for fresh ideas to fashion the nation's future.

Mr Speaker, today the parliament has come together to right a great wrong. We have come together to deal with the past so that we might fully embrace the future. We have had sufficient audacity of faith to advance a pathway to that future, with arms extended rather than with fists still clenched. So let us seize the day. Let it not become a moment of mere sentimental reflection. Let us take it with both hands and allow this day, this day of national reconciliation, to become one of those rare moments in which we might just be able to transform the way in which the nation thinks about itself, whereby the injustice administered to the Stolen Generations in the name of these, our parliaments, causes all of us to reappraise, at the deepest level of our beliefs, the real possibility of reconciliation writ large: reconciliation across all Indigenous Australia; reconciliation across the entire history of the often bloody encounter between those who emerged from the Dreamtime a thousand generations ago and those who, like me, came across the seas only yesterday; reconciliation which opens up whole new possibilities for the future.

It is for the nation to bring the first two centuries of our settled history to a close, as we begin a new chapter. We embrace with pride, admiration and awe these great and ancient cultures we are truly blessed to have among us—cultures that provide a unique, uninterrupted human thread linking our Australian continent to the most ancient prehistory of our planet. Growing from this new respect, we see our Indigenous brothers and sisters with fresh eyes, with new eyes, and we have our minds wide open as to how we might tackle, together, the great practical challenges that Indigenous Australia faces in the future.

Let us turn this page together: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, government and opposition, Commonwealth and state, and write this new chapter in our nation's story together. First Australians, First Fleeters, and those who first took the oath of allegiance just a few weeks ago— let's grasp this opportunity to craft a new future for this great land, Australia. Mr Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

Honourable members applauding—

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