

# The following information regarding communal penance services is taken from the Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia Dei* on Certain Aspects of the Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

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There is a practice which has arisen over the last few years at communal penance services which encourages people to write down their sins (usually one or two, serious or otherwise) on a slip of paper. The slip of paper is then carried to the priest-confessor, who reads it, and gives a penance and absolution. The penitent then carries the piece of paper to a brazier or some other urn for burning.

The Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia Dei*, #3 states, Since “the faithful are obliged to confess, according to kind and number, all grave sins committed after Baptism of which they are conscious after careful examination and which have not yet been directly remitted by the Church’s power of the keys, nor acknowledged in individual confession”,<sup>16</sup> any practice which restricts confession to a generic accusation of sin or of only one or two sins judged to be more important is to be reprobated. Indeed, in view of the fact that all the faithful are called to holiness, it is recommended that they confess venial sins also.<sup>17</sup>

## RELATED REFERENCES

### CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1458 Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.<sup>59</sup> Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful.<sup>60</sup>

## FOOT NOTES

16. Canon 988, §1

17. Cf. Canon 988, §2: John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984), 32: AAS 77 (1985) 267; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1458.

59. Cf. Council of Trent: DS1680; CIC, can. 988, §2

60. Cf. *Lk.* 6:36.