

## **GENERAL ABSOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR THE DIOCESE OF SPOKANE**

"Absolution cannot be imparted in a general manner to a number of penitents at once without previous individual confession unless:

- a) the danger of death is imminent and there is not time for the priest or priests to hear the confessions of the individual penitents;
- b) a serious necessity exists, that is, when in light of the number of penitents a supply of confessors is not readily available rightly to hear the confessions of individuals within a suitable time so that the penitents are forced to be deprived of sacramental grace or holy communion for a long time through no fault of their own; it is not considered a sufficient necessity if confessors cannot be readily available only because of the great number of penitents as can occur on the occasion of some great feast or pilgrimage." (C. 961)

1. General absolution must not become the norm in this diocese, but rather the exception because of special circumstances as outlined in Canon 961. Consequently, limit its use to those times of the year or special occasions when the conditions for general absolution are clearly present. If there are any questions, be in contact with the Bishop or the Vicar General so that we can measure together your request for general absolution against the general norms of the Church.
2. No previous announcement about general absolution is to be made -- only that there will be a communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is for the pastor to determine in each case in light of the numbers of penitents and confessors whether individual confessions cannot rightly be heard within a suitable time.
3. When it is reasonably possible, gather enough confessors several times a year in your parish so that communal celebration may take place with individual confessions and absolution. In the use of the second rite, the penance service should be brief so that individual confessions afterward are not rushed or prolonged over too long a period of time.
4. The Confessor(s) are to be available in the room of Reconciliation following the third rite with general absolution for anyone who wishes individual attention. In parishes with more than one priest, more than one room of reconciliation should be provided.
5. In order to provide the opportunity for people in larger parishes to celebrate the sacrament individually with the first rite, especially before Christmas and Easter, it is important that several rooms or areas of reconciliation be provided which allow anonymity as well as face-to-face options, with complete privacy guaranteed. At all times, sufficient numbers of confessors should be provided to allow people to celebrate the sacrament within a reasonable time.
6. Our people have a right and duty to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation on an individual basis, which is the norm for the reception of this sacrament. It is important that all parishes have regularly scheduled and clearly published times when this celebration is available (celebration of reconciliation by appointment only is not sufficient to take care of the needs of our people and to preserve their right to anonymity).
7. Bishop Skylstad asks that whenever General Absolution is used he be informed after the fact, indicating the approximate number of penitents present and the number of confessors available.
8. First confession must always be celebrated one-to-one with the option of anonymity carefully preserved. Young people in our parishes must be encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament individually, and given ample opportunity to do so.
9. Continued catechesis of our people about the revised Rite of Reconciliation is imperative. Proper emphasis on individual celebration of the Sacrament in order to provide motivation and consequent growth in spirituality is required for the proper renewal of this Sacrament.