

THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE

Repentance, also known as penance, is a vital part of the Christian faith, deeply rooted in the Scriptures. While the modern world shuns the idea of self-denial and repentance, The Bible repeatedly calls mankind to repentance as a means of restoring our relationship with God and purifying the soul.

Repentance as a Response to Sin

The purpose of penance begins with the recognition of sin. As Paul writes: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Sin severs our communion with God, and penance is the act by which we begin to repair this breach. The prophet Joel speaks about the power of contrition and repentance: "Y'et even now," says Jehovah, 'turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.'" (Joel 2:12).

True repentance requires a heartfelt conversion — a turning back to God with humility and sorrow.

Repentance as a Means of Sanctification

Repentance purifies the soul by establishing a real detachment from worldly desires and strengthening the virtues of humility and obedience. In Psalm 51, David wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10). Genuine purification is necessary to bring our soul in line with God's holiness. Through acts of penance — prayer, fasting, and alms giving — we seek to correct disordered attachments and reorient ourselves toward God's will.

Repentance as a Participation in Christ's Suffering

Our repentance unites us with Christ's redemptive suffering. When writing to the Colossians, Paul said: "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the assembly." (Colossians 1:24). While Christ's sacrifice is perfect and complete, our own penances allow us to share in His suffering and participate in the work of redemption. This

participation deepens our love for Him and fortifies us against future temptation.

Repentance as Reparation for Sin

The temporal consequences of sin demand satisfaction. After his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus vowed to make amends. "Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. If I have wrongfully exacted anything of anyone, I restore four times as much.'" (Luke 19:8). This restitution reflects the Church's teaching that penance is not only internal but must also manifest in tangible acts of charity, restitution, and sacrifice.

Repentance as Preparation for Eternal Life

The purpose of repentance ultimately points toward our eternal destiny. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ with a call to repentance. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). True repentance awakens the soul to the reality of judgment and the necessity of conversion. It strengthens the soul's resolve to resist sin and pursue holiness, thus preparing us to enter into eternal life.

Penance is not an outdated practice but a vital part of the Christian journey toward sanctity. By acknowledging our sins, turning back to God in sorrow, and performing acts of penance, we cooperate with His grace to purify our souls. Repentance leads to restoration, renewal, and eternal joy in Christ.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. O God, you will not despise a broken and contrite heart." (Psalm 51:17).

