

well as the assigned penance (*epitimia*). The priest then pronounces the absolution of sins. The *epitimia* is an ascetic exercise in virtues that are contrary to the sins that had been committed. The aim is to eradicate the habitual inclines lion to sin and to correct its consequences.

459 If a person has no desire to repent, and refuses to amend the damage caused by sin, he or she thereby becomes incapable of receiving forgiveness of sins, even if they have come to Confession. In order to help such a person understand their lack of repentance and motivate them to true conversion, the priest can refuse him or her absolution. Anyone intentionally concealing grave sins in Confession remains unhealed and commits a sin of sacrilege. If a person in such a state approaches Holy Communion, he or she offends the Lord and commits a grave sin.

3) The Significance of Confession in the Spiritual Life

460 In the Holy Mystery of Repentance, God grants the Christian growth in the grace of Baptism and the virtues. The closer we come to God, we see our own weaknesses and sinfulness more clearly and thus feel the need for more frequent Confession. According to the spiritual Fathers, if a person confesses rarely, he or she gradually loses the capacity to distinguish between good and evil, which has negative consequences for his or her whole life.

461 Frequent Confession makes a person spiritually sound, capable of resisting temptation; and it increases their vigour in the spiritual struggle. Appropriate occasions for Confession are the [four] fasts of the liturgical year, during which, according to Church custom, the whole family approaches the Holy Mystery of Confession.

b. The Mystery of Holy Anointing

1) Christ Heals Body and Soul

462 During his earthly ministry Christ taught in synagogues, proclaimed the Good News about the kingdom, and healed all sorts of ailments (see *Mt* 4:23). The preaching of the Gospel and the healing of the sick were signs of the coming of God's kingdom—overcoming the power of the devil and liberating people from sins. To the man presented to Christ by his friends who lowered him through the ceiling Jesus declared: "Son, your sins are forgiven" (*Mk* 2:5)—and he commanded him: "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home" (*Mk* 2:11). The friends brought the sick man, seeking healing for him. But Christ granted him both forgiveness of sins and healing.

- 463 Already in the Old Testament, those afflicted by illness recognized their finitude (that is, the limits of their existence) and reflected on how physical illness was related to sin. At the same time the sickness and suffering of the righteous person was able to become an occasion for expressing hope in the Lord and faithfulness to him (e.g. Job, Tobit). In illness, people turned to the Lord, seeking healing from him and confessing their sins before him (see Ps 6:3, 8; Ps 102[103]). In the New Testament, through his suffering and life-giving death, Jesus gives om suffering a new meaning: joined to his sufferings they become a means of purification and a path of salvation for ourselves and others.
- 464 Sending the twelve apostles to preach the Gospel, Jesus "gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness" (*Mt 10:1*). He promised that healings would accompany their preaching: "They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (*Mk 16:18*). Following Christ's example, the apostles also enjoined prayers for the afflicted: "Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven" (*Jas 5:14-15*). The Church continues the Apostolic Tradition: it celebrates the Mystery of Holy Anointing for the healing of soul and body, and for the forgiveness of sins.
- 465 The Mystery of Holy Anointing, received at the time of suffering and illness, is celebrated in order to strengthen our faith in Christ's victory over sin and death. In Holy Anointing, God grants the grace to renew a person's inner wholeness—their healing and further spiritual growth. The apostle Paul teaches that "all things work together for good for those who love God" (*Rom 8:28*). Therefore, our suffering and illness can have great spiritual value: "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (*Col 1:24*).
- 466 The Mystery of Holy Anointing is performed collegially, by the prayer of the whole Church, for the healing of soul and body. Its purpose is to strengthen trust in God and bestow forgiveness of sins as well as physical recovery. This is why the Mystery is administered to the sick and not only to the dying. By the power of the grace of the Mystery of Holy Anointing, the sick person becomes capable of seeing their illness in the light of Divine Providence and receives the strength to bear their illness and overcome it. By changing his or her attitude toward the illness, the afflicted person joins their own suffering to the salvific sufferings of Christ.