



## **Crisis in the Reception of the Sacrament of Penance by Catholic: A Research at the Parish of Santo Paulus Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Sacrament of Penance, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, is a means of forgiveness of sins and restoration of a personal relationship with God. Through this sacrament, God forgives man's sins and restores his relationship with Himself. The purpose of the sacrament is not only to absolve the recipient from sin, but also to encourage them to make a strong commitment to refrain from sin in the future. The principal objective of this study is to ascertain the comprehension of Catholics regarding the sacrament of penance and Catholics' participation in receiving the Sacrament. This research focuses on the parishioners of Santo Paulus Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan. This research employs a qualitative methodology. Data were gathered through observation of the reception of the sacrament of penance, interviews with informants to ascertain their understanding and practice of receiving the sacrament of penance, and the examination of relevant documentation. This was followed by data analysis, data reduction, data presentation, source triangulation and technique triangulation. The research reveals that Catholics have poor understanding of the sacrament of penance. The groups that are more eager to receive the Sacrament of Penance are the groups of mothers, the elderly and children. We classify these findings into the following categories: Firstly, people's understanding of the sacrament of Penance is minimal, which affects their participation in receiving the sacrament. Secondly, the implementation aspect includes both the preparation and the execution phases. The research shows that most people are not adequately prepared for confession and are not ready for its execution. This fact shows the need to educate and motivate people through catechesis so that they have a correct understanding of the importance of the sacrament of Penance.

**Keywords:** reception, sacrament, repentance, catholics

## INTRODUCTION

This research examines the crisis of reception of the Sacrament of Penance at the Parish of Santo Paulus Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan. The decrease in parishioners' involvement in the Sacrament of Penance suggests a change in their comprehension and application of this sacrament, necessitating further investigation to identify the underlying issue and potential solutions for enhancing the faithful's spiritual life. The Sacrament of Penance is one of the seven most important sacraments for Catholics, as it establishes a personal relationship with God and a place of restoration for humanity from sin and death. The Sacrament of Penance is believed to be a form of grace that God gives His Church free of charge<sup>1</sup>. In receiving this sacrament, the faithful confess their sins to God through the church's legitimate or ordained minister, namely the priest or bishop. The apostles first received the task of forgiving sins through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the feast of Easter. The Apostles experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit breathed upon them, proclaiming, "Just as the Father has sent me, so now I send you" (Jn 20:21). People understood that God Himself was the one who pardoned their sins when the Apostles did so<sup>2</sup>. The Apostles and the Church both carry out the God-given task of forgiveness, thereby accomplishing God's endless salvation<sup>3</sup>.

The minister of the sacrament gives absolution to the faithful, who sincerely regret and confess their sins and intend to repent in order to obtain forgiveness. This absolution causes the faithful to experience a spiritual rebirth in Christ<sup>4</sup>. The sacrament of penance is a sign of God's presence and his desire to build a good relationship with sinful human beings. Through it, the faithful receive forgiveness for their sins and gain full participation in the church's life<sup>5</sup>. This sacrament formally

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- 1 Paulinus Tibo, Thomas N. Tarigan, Ronika Tindaon. 2021. "Pelaksanaan Sakramen Tobat." *In Veritate Lux Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral* 9(1):69.
  - 2 Sukendar, Yohanes. 2017. "Pengampunan Menurut Kitab Suci Perjanjian Baru." *SAPA - Jurnal Kateketik dan Pastoral* 2(2): 25.
  - 3 Maian, Pe Jope. 2019. "Perbedaan Minat Umat dalam Menerima Sakramen Tobat Di Paroki Bunda Hati Kudus Keuskupan Agung Merauke." *Jurnal Jumpa* VII(1): 92.
  - 4 Markus Manurung. 2014. *Sudahkah Aku Mengaku Dosa?* Medan: Bina Media Perintis :86.
  - 5 Tinenti, H. Gregorius. 2022. "Sakramen Tobat Antara Formalitas Dan Urgensitas." *Syntax Literate; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia* 7(8): 73-92.

celebrates the sinner's repentance from his sins, expressed through a promise to not sin again and to renew her life. The Church considers the sacrament of penance essential for the people's lives<sup>6</sup>. The fourth commandment of the Church states, "Confess your sins at least once a year"<sup>7</sup>.

The Church wants its people to have God's mercy. In reality, the Church has not truly implemented this commandment. This great and noble church ideal has had its ups and downs in practice<sup>8</sup>. As time goes by, as well as the development of science and technology and globalisation, the people's acceptance and appreciation of the sacrament of penance are waning<sup>9</sup>. Many parishioners today believe that the problems they face have nothing to do with sin<sup>10</sup>. Researchers also discovered that individuals lack comprehension of the sacrament of penance, leading to a decrease in their interest in it<sup>11</sup>. The Medan Archdiocesan Supervision Team's results revealed almost the same thing: poor understanding of the sacrament of confession makes it less attractive to people. Catholics are reluctant to come to confession<sup>12</sup>.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) (1995), Kan.1849, sin is defined as a violation of reason, truth, and good conscience. In other words, sin is a defiance of God's righteous love. Humans often relate this defiance to their self-centered actions, believing they can act without fear of God. However, we cannot label all human actions or deeds related to choice and free will as sin. Similarly, not all sins are of equal moral gravity. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the

6 Laksito, Petrus Canisius Edi. 2020. "Menemukan Kembali Makna Tobat Kristiani Dari Tata Perayaan Tobat." *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 20(1): 48–71.

7 Dokpen KWI. 1983. Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia (KWI) *Kitab Hukum Kanonik (Codex Iuris Canonici) 1983*. Jakarta: Edisi Revisi 2016.

8 Op cit

9 Theresa Novita Bongi, Thalar, and damasius Silpanus. 2022. "Motivasi Orang Muda Katolik dalam Penerimaan Sakramen Tobat Di Paroki St. Pius X Tenggarong." *Gaudium Vestrum: Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral* 6(1): 18–33.

10 Niron, Angelina, Jelly. 2020. "Partisipasi Umat dalam Penerimaan Sakramen Tobat Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Realitas Sosial Umat." *JAPB: Jurnal Agama, Pendidikan Dan Budaya* 1(1): 28–34.

11 Marlin Bitu, Meja. 2022. "Pemahaman Mahasiswa STP-IPI Malang Program Studi Pendidikan Keagamaan Katolik Tentang Sakramen Tobat." *In Theos: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Theologi* 2(3): 92–97.

12 Tim Supervisi KAM. 2021. *Hasil Supervisi Pemahaman Umat Tentang Sakramen Tobat Paroki Parsoburan*. Medan: Keuakupan Agung Medan.

principles for discerning attitudes, behaviours, and sins based on reason, which give rise to objective criteria<sup>13</sup>.

True repentance must be demonstrated by living behaviour, not just words. The act of A commitment to avoid sin and strive for goodness follows the act of repentance<sup>14</sup>. Confession of sins, the faithful build a spirit of humility and efforts to restore social relations in the community (the church as a fellowship) as well as the relationship with God himself<sup>15</sup>. The Catechism of the Catholic Church writes that only God can forgive sins, and because Jesus is the Son of God, he has the power to forgive transgressions (Mrk 2:7–10). He actually exercised this power by declaring, “Your sins are forgiven” (Mrk 2:5, Luk 7:48), and thanks to his divine authority, Jesus Christ gave this power of absolution to the apostles to be exercised in his name as ministers of one’s reconciliation with God<sup>16</sup>. God, through the sacrament of penance, empowers the priest to grant the penitent the grace of God’s forgiveness (absolution) and to reunite the people into His Church.

Some Catholics have a poor understanding of the sacrament of penance which impacts their knowledge and active participation in the reception of penance. Research at St. Paulus Buntok Parish (2021) revealed this. The lack of knowledge of the sacrament of repentance also has an impact on the practice of church life as a fruit of the reconciliation of the people<sup>17</sup>. This situation is not much different from other parishes throughout Indonesia. The church consistently strives to enhance people’s understanding through various catechesis activities and other contextualized pastoral assistance. The research in Saint Mary De La Salette Parish, Muara Teweh (2021) revealed that catechesis plays a crucial role

13 Paus Yohanes, Paulus II. 1995. *Katekismus Gereja Katolik*. 1st ed. ed. Terj. Herman Embuiru. Ende: Percetakan Arnoldus Ende No.1850-1864.

14 Paulinus Tibo, Thomas N. Tarigan, Ronika Tindaon. 2021. “Pelaksanaan Sakramen Tobat.” *In Veritate Lux Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral* 9(1):68.

15 Hadiwardoyo, Al. Purwa. 2007. *Pertobatan dalam Tradisi Katolik*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius. Laksito, Petrus Canisius Edi. 2020. “Menemukan Kembali Makna Tobat Kristiani Dari Tata Perayaan Tobat.” *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 20(1): 48–71.

16 Op Cit

17 Yustinus Hendro, Romanus Romas, and Sylvester Adinuhgra. 2021. “Sakramen Rekonsiliasi Sebagai Pembaharuan Hidup Beriman Bagi Umat Di Stasi Santo Petrus Majundre Paroki Santo Paulus Buntok.” *Sepakat : Jurnal Pastoral Kateketik* 7(2): 104.

in fostering people's understanding and knowledge of the sacrament of penance. The church consistently implements catechesis to mitigate the negative effects on those receiving the sacrament of repentance<sup>18</sup>. The people really need the Church's attention through catechesis services for the sacrament of penance.

A research in the Stasi of St. Engelbert's in Teluk Betung, Kalimantan also revealed the low knowledge of the faithful about the sacrament of penance. This condition shows that people very rarely take the initiative to receive the sacrament of penance because they lack information or guidance about the sacrament of penance from both the parish and the station<sup>19</sup>. Lack of knowledge about the sacrament of penance negatively impacts people's maturity in defending their faith, leading them to view the service of the sacrament of penance as an ordinary church activity. This condition necessitates the synergy of the roles of the station pastoral council, neighborhood pastoral council, and parish to raise people's awareness, encourage, motivate, and welcome them to participate in various church activities, including the sacrament of penance service<sup>20</sup>.

The Catholic Church educates people and makes them aware of how to consistently improve their relationship with God. The sacrament of penance restores people to God. The grassroots community builds the understanding of the people, forming a contextual theology in the sacramental field. Ensuring freedom and salvation for the people requires a joint commitment from the people and the entire church hierarchy, akin to building a strong foundation. As an example of contextual theology, research on the theological contextualization of the sacrament of penance in Maluku (2021) shows how important it is to help people understand the sacrament of penance from a theological point of view and how it fits in with

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18 Resti, Eka et al. 2021. "Katekese Sakramen Tobat dalam meningkatkan pemahaman Umat di Stasisanto Petrus Paulus Panaen Paroki Santamaria De La Salette Muara Teweh." 7(2).

19 Miraliani, Timotius Tote Jelahu, and Fransiskus Janu et al. Hamu. 2020. "Relevansi Nilai-Nilai Mamapas Lewu Bagi Penghayatan Sakramen Tobat dalam Gereja Katolik di Sto. Engelbertus Teluk Betung." *Sepakat : Jurnal Pastoral Kateketik* 6(1): 60.

20 Tobing, Ona Sastri Lumban. 2018. "Peran Dewan Pastoral Stasi Terhadap Partisipasi Umat dalam Ibadat Sabda Hari Minggu." *In Veritate Lux Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral* 4(4): 41-66.

local traditions. The sacrament of repentance improves the relationship between the sinner and God in order to achieve complete salvation<sup>21</sup>.

The Church's efforts to build relationships with God and human beings are important because humans have been sinful from the beginning, and it is difficult to escape the shackles of sin. Karl Rahner held the belief that since humans have prayed from the beginning and are unable to free themselves, they require God's work for salvation<sup>22</sup>. God's grace is especially present in and through the Church's sacrament of penance. Talking about people's understanding and appreciation of the sacrament of penance has not been a serious concern for researchers because each diocese and parish in Indonesia has various concepts and strategies for building people's understanding. Nevertheless, the Church is always optimistic about making the faithful realize and understand the sacrament of penance and its implications in daily life. The interest of the faithful in receiving the sacrament of penance varies. Participants in community catechesis and those who have not learned about penance differ<sup>23</sup>. Parishioners' awareness of receiving the sacrament of penance is born from individual awareness and will then impact other individuals. Basically, humans will be more motivated if there is encouragement, direction, and movement from external parties<sup>24</sup>.

The Catholic students, like other adults, also struggle with understanding and practicing the sacrament of penance. The findings of research conducted at the University of Nusa Cendana Kupang (2023) show that there is still a low understanding of the meaning of the sacrament of penance, and it also has an impact on the practice of receiving the sacrament<sup>25</sup>. This experience encourages

21 Rahawarin, Bernard Antonius, Fabianus Selatang, and Ignasius S.S. Refo. 2021. "Kontekstualisasi Teologis Sakramen Tobat dalam Tradisi Sob Lor Pada Masyarakat Kei Provinsi Maluku." *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)* 7(01): 115–28.

22 Martasudjita, E. Pranawa Dhatu. 2018a. "Pemahaman Sabda Pengampunan Allah dalam Sakramen Tobat Menurut Karl Rahner." *Diskursus - Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Stf Driyarkara* 17(2): 147–76.

23 Sarang, Rikardus Kristian. 2019. "Perbedaan Minat Umat dalam Menerima Sakramen Tobat di Paroki Bunda Hati Kudus Kuper Keuskupan Agung Merauke (Tinjauan Dengan Katekese Dan Tanpa Katekese)." *Jurnal Masalah Pastoral* 7(0–1): 12–31.

24 Paulinus Tibo, Thomas N. Tarigan, Ronika Tindaon. 2021. "Pelaksanaan Sakramen Tobat." *In Veritate Lux Jurnal Kateketik Pastoral* 9(1):70.

25 Gabriel, Siprianus Soleman Senda, and Yohanes Darisalib Jeramu. 2023. "Pemahaman Dan Praktik Sakramen Tobat Di Kalangan Mahasiswa Katolik Jurusan Administrasi Negara Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Dan

the church to pay attention to people from various categorical groups, such as teenagers, students, young Catholics, parents, and other categorical groups. The real form of attention for all groups of the faithful is the catechesis of the people on the sacraments<sup>26</sup>.

The focus of this research lies in three areas: 1. This research specifically investigates the crisis of receiving the sacrament of penance within Santo Paulus Parish, Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan, a previously unexplored area. 2. This research not only examines the decline in the number of parishioners' participation in the sacrament of penance but also delves deeper into the understanding, attitudes, and practices of the faithful regarding this sacrament. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the root issues behind the crisis. 3. This research seeks concrete and applicable pastoral solutions to overcome the crisis of receiving the sacrament of penance in the parish. Church leaders expect the resulting recommendations to provide valuable input in enhancing the quality of sacramental service and reinvigorating the faithful's appreciation for the sacrament of penance. We anticipate that this research will significantly advance the understanding of sacramental pastoral care, especially in the context of the Catholic Church in Indonesia.

## METHODOLOGY

This research data collection process employs a qualitative approach (Sugiyono 2019). To this end, the researcher conducted interviews with 13 Catholic informants, a church administrator, and a priest who performs the sacrament of penance. Additionally, the researcher observed the implementation of the sacrament of repentance service, encompassing the stages of self-preparation, its execution, and the implications of receiving it in everyday life. The third technique involved

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Politik Universitas Nusa Cendana Kupang(AnalisisDan Refleksi Teologis-Pastoral)." *I Multidisiplin Ilmu* 2(4): 25-30.

26 Syem Dunia Yosep. 2023. "Upaya Meningkatkan Pemahaman Sakramen Baptis Dan Tobat Melalui Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dengan Model PBL Pada Kelas VIII SMPN 2 Sebuk." *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Dan Agama* 4(2): 1421-40.



the documentation of the data to support the research. In 2023, the research took place in the parish of St. Paulus Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan. The data analysis stage commenced with data reduction and display activities, followed by the application of triangulation techniques based on observation, interviews, and documentation-based supporting data. The subsequent phase is the triangulation of sources, based on key informants and supporting informants, with the objective of identifying data that has been subjected to a process of trustworthiness and validity assessment<sup>27</sup>. The researchers conducted an analysis with the aim of producing a conclusion that is aligned with the data source.

## DISCUSSION

### Understanding the Sacrament of Penance

The Sacrament of Penance, also known as the Sacrament of Confession, is empowered to free people from sin and death. Baptized individuals have shattered their connection with God due to their sins<sup>28</sup>. This sacrament reveals the Church's faith in a celebration, facilitates a real-life encounter with Christ, and leads to human salvation<sup>29</sup>. Based on data obtained from informants in interviews (2023) at St. Paulus Pulo Brayan Parish about the elements of the sacrament of penance: remorse, confession, absolution, and penitence, the people have not fully understood the sacrament of penance correctly. This experience is based on several factors, such as the lack of formation and deepening in the form of catechesis on the theme of the sacrament of penance. Another experience is that parishioners' interest in participating in confession is very low, and their awareness of the importance of receiving this sacrament is also minimal.

27 Moleong, Lexy. J. 2013. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya. Niron, Angelina, Jelly. 2020. "Partisipasi Umat dalam Penerimaan Sakramen Tobat dan Relevansinya Terhadap Realitas Sosial Umat." *JAPB: Jurnal Agama, Pendidikan Dan Budaya* 1(1): 28-34.

28 Laurensius Dihe, S. 2013. *Sakramen Tobat di Tengah Globalisasi*. PT Kanisius.

29 Rikardus Moses Jehaut. 2021. *Sakramen Tobat Dan Pengurapan Orang Sakit dalam Kitab Hukum Kanonik*. Yogyakarta: PT Kanisius.



### Contrition

Contrition is a fundamental attitude one must have to receive the sacrament of penance. We can divide remorse into two categories: perfect contrition and imperfect contrition (*attritio*)<sup>30</sup>. Perfect contrition is when a person is aware of his sin and confesses it sincerely as an offense that damages his relationship with the all-good God. Contrition is not perfect if one confesses one's sins, driven by fear of punishment and shame if one's transgressions become known<sup>31</sup>. People feel sad before entering the confessional room because they remember past sins, and when they reflect, they really feel regret for having committed that sin<sup>32</sup>. According to the research results from interviews with informants (2023), people confess because they truly feel sinful, and the parish arranges a schedule for their acceptance. However, the research also revealed that some parishioners confess to show respect and avoid disappointing the parish priest who has scheduled the sacrament's reception. The revelation indicated a sense of fear towards the priest when only a small number of parishioners receive the sacrament of penance.

### Confession

Confession is the act of presenting sins committed in the past before the priest, who is the minister of the sacrament. Confession liberates and makes one at peace with others<sup>33</sup>. Through confession, one sees the honesty of one's sins, that one is sinful, and thus opens oneself to accepting responsibility for one's sins. He does not hide his sins before God. This was expressed by one of the informants in the interview (2023), who stated that, in the confessional, all sins are revealed and nothing is hidden. The quiet atmosphere of the confession room allowed him to smoothly convey all of his sins. After confessing my sins, I feel happy and grateful

30 Paus Yohanes, Paulus II. 1995. *Katekismus Gereja Katolik*. 1st ed. ed. Terj. Herman Embuiru. Ende: Percetakan Arnoldus Ende.

31 Martasudjita, E Pranawa Dhatu. 2018. "Pemahaman Sabda Pengampunan Allah dalam Sakramen Tobat Menurut Karl Rahner." *Diskursus-Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Stf Driyarkara* 17(2): 87.

32 Waruwu, Ermina, Emma Martina Pakpahan, and Benediktus Benteng Kurniadi. 2020. "Tindak Tutur Direktif Imam Katolik Pada Ritus Pengakuan Dosa Dan Penerapan Penitensi Oleh Umat Katolik Di Kota Medan." *Kode: Jurnal Bahasa* 9(3): 164.

33 Osborne, Kenan. 2001. *Reconciliation and Justification: The Sacrament and Its Theology*. Eugene Oregon Amerika Serikat: Paulist Press.

because I believe that God has pardoned me. However, there was also an expression that people were reluctant to confess their sins because they already knew the priest who administered the penance sacrament. People are more willing to confess to an unknown priest if they are not familiar with him.

### **Absolution**

Absolution comes from the Latin word 'absolutio', which means to forgive; hence, the word absolution means forgiveness<sup>34</sup>. The priest bestows God's grace of forgiveness (absolution) on the penitent during the sacrament of penance celebration. Absolution is a sign of God's willingness to reunite the penitent with Himself and the church. The priest is the one who provides absolution, acting on behalf of Christ (in persona Christi) and the Church (in persona Ecclesiae). The research informants provided a clear understanding of absolution. This is stated: "The benefits felt after receiving the sacrament of penance are having confidence that God has forgiven their sins and even having the intention in their hearts not to repeat the same mistakes." Furthermore, with absolution, one feels like a new human being, healed from sin's pain. Thus, we live out the sacrament of penance as healing.<sup>35</sup>

### **Penitence**

Penitence can be defined as the act of repenting for one's sins. It is a form of personal repentance through voluntary abstinence and fasting, prayer, charity, helping others, and other charitable activities. Performing repentance aims to restore the soul and strengthen the relationship with God. Research reveals that repentance serves as a means to mend a relationship with God that sin has severed. So, confession before the priest is one of the means to repair the damaged relationship with God. We achieve this by resolutely and sincerely intending to refrain from committing the same sin or error once more. The faithful actually fulfill the penance given, even though they may fall into sin again afterward.

34 Markus Manurung. 2014. *Sudahkah Aku Mengaku Dosa?* Medan: Bina Media Perintis :86.

35 Ramita, Cici et al. 2020. "Komunikasi Iman Umat Katolik Mewujudkan Persekutuan Yang Kokoh di Stasi Santo Petrus Runggu Raya." 6(1).

## Repentance

Following the reception of the penance sacrament, there is a commitment to repent intellectually, morally, and religiously. Firstly, intellectual repentance is a change in human consciousness to return to true reality. Intellectual repentance is the process of overturning from “what seems to be true” to “what is actually true”<sup>36</sup>. The study results indicate that the congregation in the confessional room discloses all their sins to the priest, who administers the sacrament, seeking forgiveness and cleansing from all sins. Second, moral repentance is about one’s own decisions and options. According to Lonergan, morality is a form of interdependent identity, a transcendence of the true self<sup>37</sup>. The study results show that this repentance must go beyond mere desire and emotional satisfaction to necessity and truth. People have a good understanding of sin, which is defined as the violation of God’s prohibitions. People realize their weaknesses because they still commit sins even though they know that they are sins. People still transgress. Humans commit sin knowingly, even though it is wrong. People’s moral repentance is often only temporary. Third, religiosity is the guiding principle for moral and intellectual reflection. Lonergan explains that religious repentance serves as the foundation for both intellectual and moral repentance, paving the way for self-transcendence and enabling humans to achieve perfect repentance<sup>38</sup>. The results demonstrated that to engage in intellectual and moral repentance, individuals must first prepare their minds, pray, reflect on their past sins, and patiently await their turn to enter the confessional room. To engage in religious repentance, one must rely on God’s grace, which inspires and motivates one to break free from attachments that lead to sin.

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36 Nyoman, Sudanta. 2020. “Pertobatan Wibisana dalam Novel Rahwana Kisah Rahasia Karya Enand Neelakantan Tinjauan Etika Rene Girard.” 4: 33–46.

37 Martasudjita, E Pranawa Dhatu. 2018. “Pemahaman Sabda Pengampunan Allah dalam Sakramen Tobat Menurut Karl Rahner.” *Diskursus-Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Stf Driyarkara* 17(2): 87.

38 Rahawarin, Bernard Antonius, Fabianus Selatang, and Ignasius S.S. Refo. 2021. “Kontekstualisasi Teologis Sakramen Tobat dalam Tradisi Sob Lor Pada Masyarakat Kei Provinsi Maluku.” *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)* 7(01): 115–28.

### **The Practice of Receiving the Sacrament of Penance**

The Catholic Church recognizes the sacrament of penance as a means of confession. Therefore, expression that say that “I can directly confess my sins to God without going through a priest” is an inaccurate appreciation of the teachings of the Catholic Church<sup>39</sup>. So, in fact, understanding the penance sacrament greatly influences a person’s acceptance of it<sup>40</sup>. There is a notable lack of interest among the parishioners of Santo Paulus Parish, Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan, in receiving the penance sacrament. The parish priest has provided and scheduled specific times to administer the sacrament of penance, yet the number of Catholics receiving it remains relatively low. Another crisis facing the Catholic faithful is the lack of knowledge and complex understanding of the sacrament of penance. In addition, some parishioners do not receive the sacrament because they feel embarrassed in front of the priest, whom they know well. This embarrassment makes Catholics reluctant to confess their sins. The understanding that individuals can confess their sins through private prayer without needing to receive the sacrament of penance is another factor to consider. This reveals that people actually do not have a true understanding of what the sacrament of penance is.

### **Endless Repentance**

The Parish St. Paulus Pulo Brayan Bengkel Medan has provided special times for the reception of the sacrament of penance, namely during Advent and Lent. Additionally, parishioners have the freedom to ask the priest at any time if they need to confess their sins. The Parish Priest always facilitate the sacrament of penance for as many Catholics as possible. However, the reality is that individuals often fail to provide sufficient self-giving during subsequent confessions. People can claim numerous reasons not to attend the confession<sup>41</sup>. This perspective aligns with the viewpoint expressed by the informant during the 2023 interview:

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39 Barense J. 2014. “Rethinking Christian Identity: Doctrine and Discipleship by Medi Ann Volpe.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20(65): 375–78.

40 Sujoko, Albertus. 2008. *Praktek Sakramen Pertobatan*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

41 Bagiyowinadi, Didiek FX. 2003. *Menghidupi Tradisi Katolik*. Yogyakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Nusantara.

“There are still quite a few parishioners who do not participate in receiving the sacrament of confession; there are also various reasons given, such as being busy with personal activities. The minimal participation of parishioners can be attributed to their lack of understanding about the sacrament of penance, which in turn, reduces their interest in receiving it.

Observational results indicate a significant decrease in parishioner participation during the sacrament of penance in the parish. At the time of the study, no more than 60 people had confessed their sins, with a total of 2072 parishioners. Only around 2.89% of the total number of parishioners were present. The congregation consisted of fathers, mothers, and young Catholics (OMK).

### CONCLUSION

The lack of comprehension of the sacrament of penance renders individuals less inclined to accept and adhere to its tenets. Some even espouse the view that individuals do not require the mediation of a priest to confess their sins, but can instead direct their prayers directly to God. Secondly, the sacrament of penance has not assumed a pivotal role in the lives of individuals who adhere to a faith tradition. The sacrament of penance has not emerged as a primary focus of their spiritual lives. Consequently, individuals have not attended the designated times set aside by the Church for the purpose of confessing their sins.

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