

Points for Panel 4.2 of Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse. Fr Frank O'Loughlin

- There is a history of diverse forms of the sacrament of penance: Exclusion Penance ( 2<sup>nd</sup> -> 5<sup>th</sup> C.); Tariff Penance (5<sup>th</sup> ->11<sup>th</sup> C); Individual Confession (12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> C ->). The Present Fluid Situation (mid 20th C ->)
- \* The Confessional Seal is not something that can be given up by the Church.
- The confessional seal applies only to the confessing person's own sins. Not to those of anyone else.
- Reserved Sin. Certain sins have been reserved to certain people in the past, some to the Pope. This usually occurred to make the point that the sin concerned was very serious and was taken very seriously by the Church. The reservation of the sin makes no difference to the confessional seal, but would be an element in avoiding 'cheap forgiveness'. It would also make clear how seriously the Church took that sin. The person to whom such confessions were reserved would be appointed by the bishop taking advice from others.
- The history of the confessions of children manifests different practices to that of today. We do not have enough accurate research about this history. Confession and communion occurred at a later age until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- There has been – and is - considerable theological and pastoral discussion over the last 50-70 years over many issues involved in the sacrament of penance, such as the image of God involved in the practice of the sacrament, re-appraisals of the meaning of sin and its history and a generally greater awareness of the history of the sacrament which highlights the influence of different contexts on the various forms of the sacrament.