

Chapter 5
The Sacrament of Penance
[*The Welcome Table* (Negro Spiritual)]

This assignment touches on the lyrics in The Welcome Table and connects them with Revelation 19:6-9. Introduce the assignment by explaining the following in your own words:

The traditional spiritual *The Welcome Table* is a powerful expression of hope created by enslaved African Americans who were denied dignity and barred from earthly tables. It expresses a dual hope: physical freedom on earth and eternal, radical hospitality in heaven. Scripturally, this “Welcome Table” finds its ultimate fulfillment in Revelation 19:6–9, which describes the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. In this passage, God’s people are clothed in “bright, clean linen garment,” representing their righteous deeds, and are invited to celebrate the final victory of Christ. The Sacrament of Penance acts as our modern preparation for this feast. It cleanses us of sin, restores our garments of grace, and reconciles us with God and the community so we can joyfully take our place at the table.

Play a traditional African American singing of *The Welcome Table* (e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWW-f2yIguU> has lyrics included) Next, pass out the worksheet to the students and have them write their responses to each set of questions. When they have completed writing, conduct a general class discussion to go over the responses.

The Welcome Table (Negro Spiritual) Assignment

Read Revelation 19:6–9. Then, answer the following questions in writing.

1. Re-read Revelation 19:6, where the crowd shouts “Alleluia!” because God reigns. Confession is meant to bring us that same deep peace and joy. What is one area of your life where you need God's mercy to replace fear or guilt with an “Alleluia”?
2. Revelation 19:8 states that the Bride (the Church) is given “bright, clean linen garments” to wear, which represents righteous deeds. In the Sacrament of Penance, our sins are washed away, and our souls are restored. How does going to Confession act as “putting on clean linen” for God’s table?
3. How does the imagery of a wedding feast in Revelation 19:9 match the hope of the enslaved people singing about a “Welcome Table”?
4. Enslaved Christians sang *The Welcome Table* despite facing brutal oppression. They believed God's mercy was powerful enough to heal even the deep wounds of slavery. How does the Sacrament of Penance remove the walls of sin, which lead to racism and hate?