

Why do we confess to a priest?

Faithful Questions – March 2020

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Overview

- Value and Purpose of Confession
 - Catechism section overview
 - Priest as minister
- The confessional emotional cycle
 - Why it's hard to go
- How to prepare for confession
 - Knowing when it's time to go
 - Examination of conscience
- Mechanics of going to confession
 - Confession times in the area

Intermission!



Value and Purpose



Sacraments of Healing

- Seven Sacraments

- Initiation

- Baptism (once)
- Confirmation (once)
- Eucharist (thousands)
- Why initiation?

- Christ said we must: Be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit and eat His Body/Blood

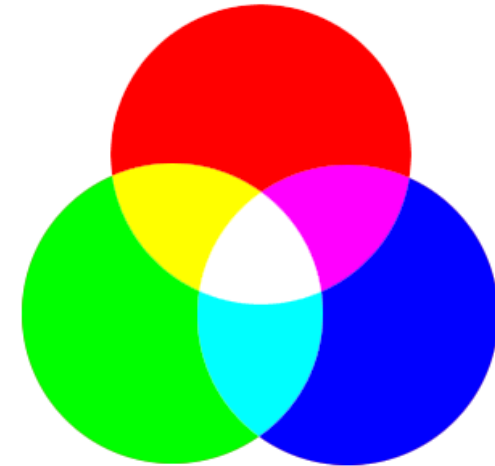
- Healing

- Reconciliation (Confession) (hundreds)
- Anointing of the Sick (few times)

- Vocation

- Marriage (once, maybe a couple/few)
- Holy Orders (aka Ordination as bishop/priest/deacon) (once/three)

- Remember that confession is for healing!





Five Names

- Sacrament of Conversion
 - Sacrament of Penance
 - Sacrament of Confession
 - Sacrament of Forgiveness
 - Sacrament of Reconciliation
-
- Which one is it?
 - It's all of them!



Conversion

- Catechism paragraph 1426
 - *Conversion* to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us "holy and without blemish," just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is "holy and without blemish." Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls *concupiscence*, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life. This is **the struggle of conversion directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.**
- We are always called to conversion



Forgiveness & Reconciliation

- Catechism paragraph 1440
 - Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church...
- Catechism paragraph 1446
 - Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. ...the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."



Forgiveness & Reconciliation Cont.

- When we sin, we distance ourselves from God
- We undo (perhaps only partially) the graces of our Baptism
- Forgiveness restores
 - Baptismal graces
 - Our relationship with God
- Reconciled with
 - God
 - Church



Penance

- Catechism paragraph 1460
 - The penance the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent's personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. **Such penances help configure us to Christ**, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, "provided we suffer with him."



Why to a priest?

- Catechism paragraphs 1441 & 1442
 - Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and exercises this divine power: "Your sins are forgiven." **Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.**
 - Christ has willed that in her prayer and life and action his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood. **But he entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry which he charged with the "ministry of reconciliation."** The apostle is sent out "on behalf of Christ" with "God making his appeal" through him and pleading: "Be reconciled to God."



Why to a priest? – Cont.

- John 20:19-23
 - On the evening of that first day of the week,ⁱ when the doors were locked, where the disciples^{*} were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.^{*} The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again,[!] “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,^m “Receive the holy Spirit. **Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.**”



Why to a priest? – Summary

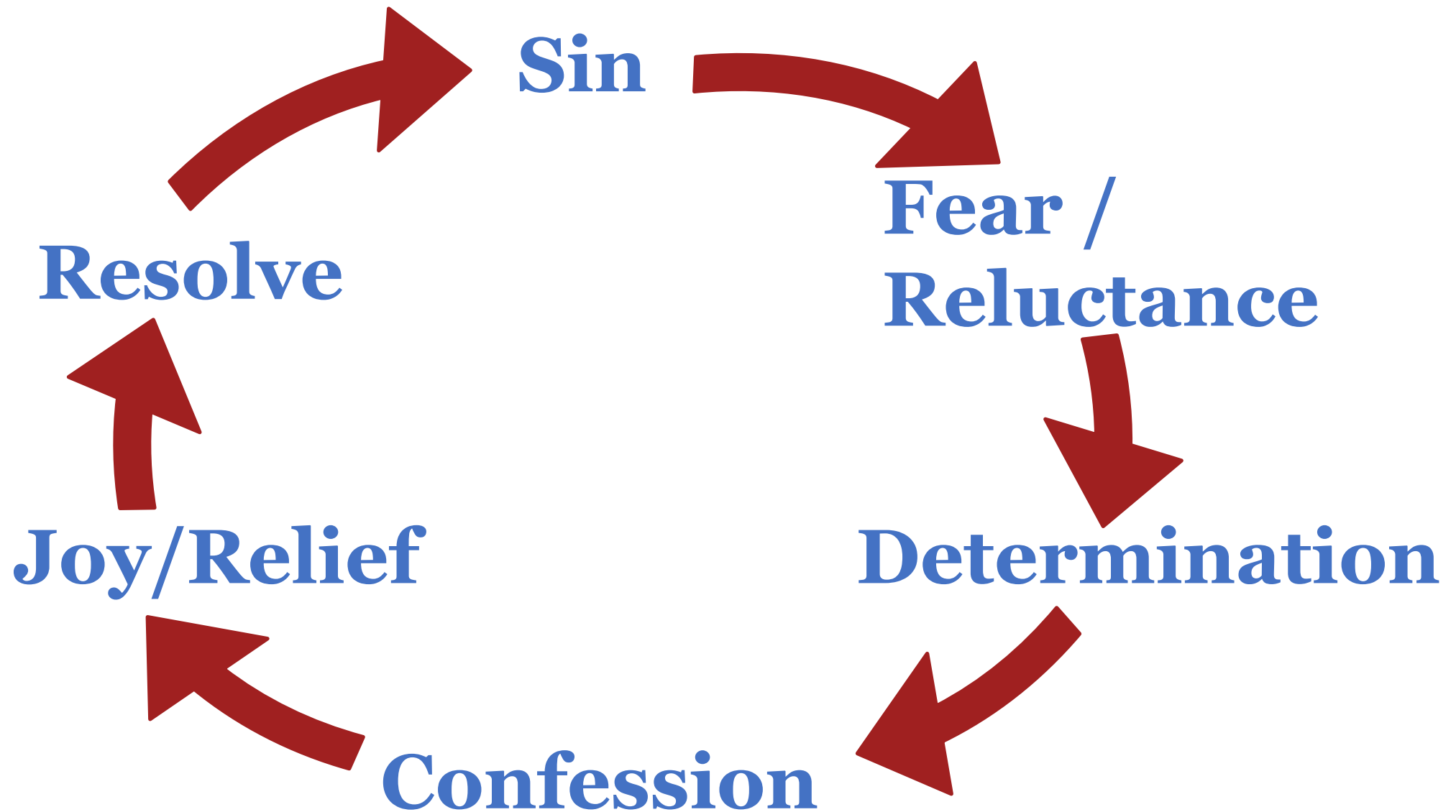
- Only God forgives sins
- But God gave the Church the power to be His instrument on earth
 - Needed once He ascended
- The clergy (Bishops, Priests, Deacons) are given specific powers to fulfill that purpose
 - Confession is one of them
- Said another way
 - God wants to forgive incarnationally
 - He's not here right now
 - Knowing that he gave the Church (and thus priests) to be Christ for us when we need to confess



The Confession emotion cycle



Expect to go through this cycle





It is hard to go to confession

- And that's a good thing!
 - If it was easy, we probably aren't taking our sins seriously
- It is **MUCH** harder to admit out loud that we have failed than to ourselves
 - True both with people and with God



Reconciling takes action

- There's a reason it's a stereotype for husbands to bring home flowers when he's apologizing
 - People we've let down want to see action to prove our seriousness
- We also don't know if we are forgiven without asking for it
 - Talking about it out loud helps prove to ourselves we are forgiven
 - Isn't it good to know that God has forgiven us?



Confession best for:

- Serious sin
 - Hard to believe we're forgiven when it's really serious
- Repetitive sin
 - Hard to believe God really will forgive 77 times:
 - Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. (Mt 18:21-22)
 - Note: That's not an exact number to be taken literally



Jesus forgives Peter (John 21)

- Peter denied Christ 3 times and Christ sat him down and had him confess 3 times
 - When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,^{*} “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”^{*} He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you,ⁱ when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”^k



Intermission!





Intermission!

Time is Up!





Preparing to go to confession



How to know it is time

- If you've done a serious sin, the time is now
 - It's not complicated
- However, for most of us, we build up minor sins and the time to go can be unclear
 - The most important thing is to pray regularly
 - God will tell you when it's time through your prayer
 - For me it's the emotional equivalent of having eaten a bad meal that isn't "sitting well"
- Set a minimum
 - Suggestion: 4 times a year
 - 2 penance services (Lent and Advent)
 - 2 times between Easter and Thanksgiving (beginning of Advent)



Examination of conscience

- Confession forgives ALL of our sin
 - Thus we should do our best to think beyond the ones that are weighing on our souls
- Lots of options
 - <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/penance/examinations-of-conscience.cfm>
 - <http://www.beginningcatholic.com/catholic-examination-of-conscience>
 - <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/sacrament-of-penance-examination-of-conscience-9121>
 - Or just google it
- Suggestion: Write down sins you're confessing



What to confess – part 1

- Don't need to give details
 - Nature of the sin is sufficient
- For repetitive sins give frequency/magnitude
 - Doesn't need to be precise
- Group similar sins together
 - Just to help priest understand
- I tend to use a least to worst strategy
 - But opposite is fine too
 - Just do your best to be systematic in some way
- Don't skip anything just because it is small
 - But don't let details force you to over separate sins



What to confess – part 2

- Don't re-confess previously forgiven sins
 - Confession forgives ***ALL*** our sins
 - Even those we honestly forgot about
- If you are struggling with accepting forgiveness for an already forgiven instance of sin, confess that you are struggling to accept forgiveness
- New instances of the same sin should be confessed



Review the Rite

- You'll feel better knowing you know the procedure
- Remember that it's just for convenience
 - If you botch it entirely, the priest can make it valid
- Print out act of contrition
 - <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/prayers/act-of-contrition.html>



Mechanics of going to confession



Confession times

- **Sunday**
 - St. Lawrence (North Highlands) at 7:45 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM (before Masses)
- **Monday**
 - Cathedral (Sacramento) at 11:30 AM
- **Tuesday**
 - St. Clare (Roseville) at 4 PM
 - St. Lawrence (North Highlands) at 5 PM
- **Wednesday**
 - St. Rose (Roseville) at 5 PM
- **Thursday**
 - Holy Family (Citrus Heights) at 5 PM
- **Friday**
 - Cathedral (Sacramento) at 11:30 AM
- **Saturday**
 - St. Clare (Roseville) at 9 AM
 - St. Rose (Roseville) at 3 PM
 - Ss. Peter and Paul (Rocklin) at 3:30 PM

**No excuses!
When it's
time to go:
Go TODAY!**



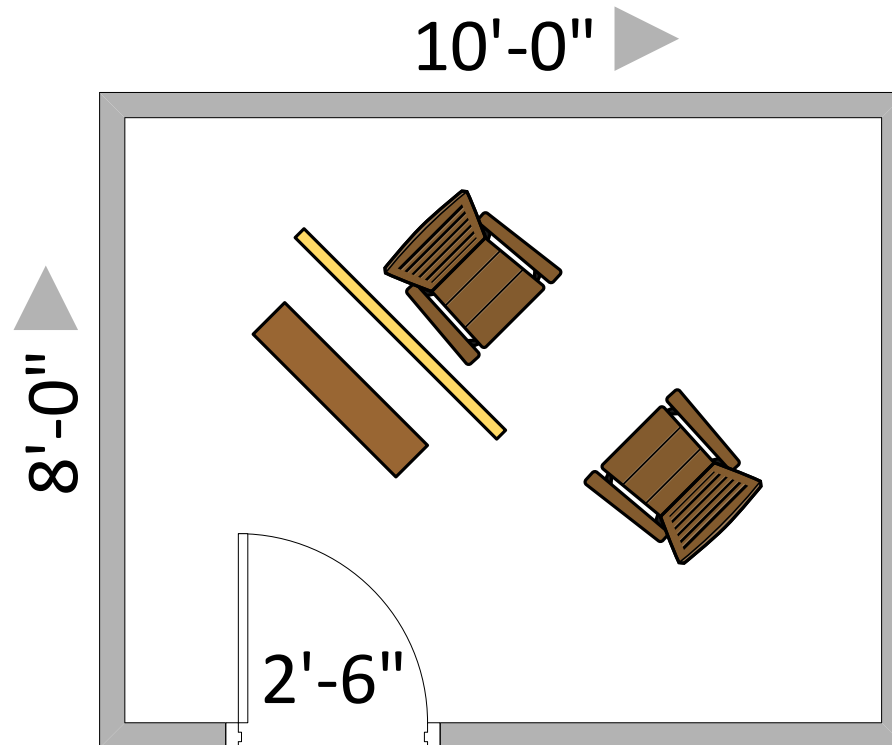
When to show up

- **Argument for 15 minutes early**
 - Line usually develops
 - Priests are usually spend more time with you early
 - If you have time constraints, easier to know when you will be done
 - Sometimes priests have other commitments and doesn't get to everyone
- **Argument for 30 minutes late**
 - Usually a long line – Start your penance early!
 - Allows those with time constraints to go first
 - Gives more time for extended examination of conscience
 - Gives time for other prayers
 - Usually shorter confession itself (if that's what you want)



Face to Face or anonymous

- Two choices of where to sit/kneel
 - Behind a screen where the priest can't see you
 - In a chair facing the priest





Rite itself - part 1

- Greeting
 - The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.
- The sign of the Cross
 - Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross.
- Confess your sins
 - You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [time] since my last confession.”
 - Confess all your sins to the priest.
 - If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help.
 - When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”



Rite itself - part 2

- **Penance**
 - The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.
- **Act of Contrition**
 - After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:
 - My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
 - In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
 - I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
 - I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
 - Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
 - In his name, my God, have mercy.



Rite itself - part 3

- **Absolution**
 - The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution.
 - You respond, “Amen.”
- **Praise**
 - The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever”
- **Dismissal**
 - The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”



Conclusion



Conclusion

- Confession is awesome
 - But awesome doesn't mean easy
- Make use of it frequently
 - The fact that it's hard probably means you need it
 - Particularly true if struggling with habitual sin
- Don't let it being hard stand in your way
- Don't let the format stand in the way
 - Just show up!



Satisfaction Survey

- Did you enjoy this talk? Or not?
- Let me know:
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog>
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/take-the-march-faithful-questions-survey>
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/quiz/march-2020-faithful-questions-satisfaction-survey/>



Next Time

- 2nd Tuesday – April 14th
- 7:00 PM in the Morris Hall
 - Standard Time
- Topic
 - How can I keep my kids Catholic?
- Future Topics
 - May: Is the Eucharist really the Body and Blood of Christ?



Additional Information

- Webpage:
 - <http://deaconken.org>
- E-mail:
 - ken@deaconken.org
- Slides
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/category/faithful-questions-seminar/>
 - <http://deaconken.org/blog/>
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date.
 - Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>



2 Minute Break
Think of your questions!

02:00



2 Minute Break

Time is Up!





Questions?