

SMK/Mary's Cafe: February 16, 2024

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Our Sin & God's Mercy

Current Context: Just "Catholic Guilt"?

The Big Picture & the Mission of Jesus Christ

Christ came to heal, teach and sanctify by His GRACE.

He called souls to repent. (Matt 4:17, Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3ff)

Jesus used outward signs to give His grace and healing.

He founded a Church to continue His mission to teach and sanctify.

Sacraments: OUTWARD SIGNS, INSTITUTED BY CHRIST, to GIVE US HIS GRACE

The sacraments are all about relationship, not rules.

Sanctifying Grace - the supernatural life of God; Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

The sacraments are efficacious (not mere ordinances or symbols). (CCC 1127)

Power of the Sacraments: they work *ex opere operato* (CCC 1128)

a. Not dependant on personal holiness of the minister

b. Though fruitfulness IS affected by **disposition** of the recipient

The Reality of Sin

Definition: Sin is an offense against God - against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods.

It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. (CCC 1849-1850)

Sin is an obstacle to achieving holiness & eternal life with Him.

Many passages demonstrate this, including Mt 25:31-46 (judgment) & 1 Cor 6:9-11.

All sin is wrong, but not all actions have equal gravity. Even human law sees this.

This is recognized in Scripture (Luke 12:40-48 and 1 John 5:16-17)

In 1 John 5, clear description of most serious type of sin (deadly/mortal).

Different Kinds of Sins (CCC 1852-64; 1 John 5:16-17)

Mortal Sin: a grave violation of divine law that destroys charity in the soul

Three Conditions of Mortal Sin (CCC 1857-1860)

a. Grave Matter: specified by the 10 Commandments

b. Full Knowledge: knowledge of the sinful character of the act

c. Deliberate Consent: must be a personal choice

Note: Ignorance or lack of consent can diminish or even remove guilt of sin.

Effects of Mortal Sin

a. Loss of sanctifying grace; destroys our relationship with God

b. If we die in a state of mortal sin, we self-exclude from kingdom of God

Venial Sin: a lesser violation that offends and wounds charity

Effects of Venial Sin

a. Weakens charity; damages (does not break) our relationship with God

b. Disorders our affections/attachments, hinders growth in virtue

c. Merits Temporal Punishment for Sin

d. Predisposes us to commit Mortal Sin

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (CCC 1422-1498)

Obtains forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism.
Restores sanctifying grace to the soul damaged by mortal sin.

Common Objection: Why must we go to a priest?? Whose idea was that??

Jesus entrusted to His Apostles the power to bind and loose (Matt 16:19, Matt 18:18)

Jesus entrusted to His Apostles the power to forgive sins.

It was **JESUS** who instituted the Sacrament of Penance, principally in John 20:19-23

He breathed on them... giving power to forgive sins.

It is **JESUS** (CCC1441) who forgives sins, through the priest who acts *in persona Christi*.

Development of the Sacrament in the Church

Early Church - Serious sins, severe and public penance

Seventh Century - private confession of sins

The Nuts and Bolts of Confession

Precept of the Church - Once per year, bare minimum. (CCC 2042)

Mortal Sins - All must be confessed in number and kind. (CCC 1456.)

Purposeful omission of mortal sin nullifies the sacrament.

Venial Sins - While not strictly necessary, confession of venial sins is strongly recommended by the Church. (CCC 1458)

How to Go to Confession? Don't worry about the details!

What is the key to fruitfulness?

Prayer and proper preparation through Examination of Conscience.

CCC 1454 - "The reception of this sacrament ought to be prepared for by an examination of conscience made in the light of the Word of God."

Confess for Success

Remember: We are NOT our sins.

Be Comfortable: Option for face-to-face or anonymous

Be Assured: Absolutely Confidential & Merciful

Be Honest: Focus on the Most Serious

All Mortal Sins since last confession, (and the most nagging venial)

Be Purposeful: Firm purpose of amendment

Be Steadfast: Frequency?

Upon awareness of mortal sin

Sins from the Past - What's okay and what's to be avoided

What are the practical benefits of regular confession, even of venial sins?

The Holy Spirit can fortify and equip us for Christian witness

CCC 1458 -- Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our

conscience, fight against **evil tendencies**, let ourselves be **HEALED** by Christ and

progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are **spurred to be merciful** as he is merciful.

Conclusion The Church needs saints... the world needs saints.

Regular confession strengthens your soul, makes you a better witness to Christ.