

VISITATION CHURCH

# First Reconciliation

Jesus

choice forgiving offense think many practice habit just seven work breaks people  
forgiveness must one times lovely forgiveness  
death freedom knows hard like time want know lives required  
forgiven forgive love  
person God Peter binds others  
natural



# Confession is about the mind-boggling mercy of God

By DENNIS BAKER

Sept. 25 was one of those spectacular autumn days in New York. The heat of the summer had faded away, and a brilliant, blue, cloudless sky greeted the world.

At about 1 p.m., I walked out the door of the house I share with nine other Jesuits, and walked up Eighth Avenue to Madison Square Garden. I was asked to hear confessions before the papal Mass, and doing so was one of the most profound graces of my life.

On my way up there, it struck me that the last time I was at the Garden was for Game 5 of the NHL Eastern Conference semifinals in early May — a game to which my very generous friends Chris and Heather invited me along with another close friend from college.

I had a great time that night. We all ending up screaming at the top of our lungs, with both hands in the air, as Rangers captain Ryan McDonagh's wrist shot beat the Washington Capitals' goalkeeper, Braden Holtby, in overtime.

I knew the papal Mass would be much different from a Ranger playoff game, but also really did not know what I was in for.

After I went through security screening — this was the first time I had ever been screened by TSA at the Garden — I found a priest I had never met before who was holding a clipboard. He greeted me, found my name on his sheet, and said, "OK, we're using the ticket area as confessionals. So just find an empty one." I walked over to Window 10, took out my purple stole, and put it on. I adjusted the two folding chairs in my little aisle, and waved over the next person in line.

For the more than four hours that followed, I, along with other priests, heard confessions of many, many people who were there for the Mass. More than one person said through teary eyes that they had not been to confession in more than 30 years, and it felt so good to be back in the sacrament.

It felt great for me, as well. All of those confessions were truly privileged moments for me, just as almost all of the confessions I have heard have been.

People often ask me, "What's it like to hear confessions?" Many times, the question comes from other Catholics, sometimes even from guys who are preparing for the priesthood themselves. Sometimes the question comes from non-Catholics, or non-believers. I suppose the question stems from wanting to know what it's



A priest prepares to hear confessions before the start of a Mass to be celebrated by Pope Francis at Madison Square Garden in New York Sept. 25. (Photo: Newscom/Polaris)

like to hear people's "dirty little secrets."

My response is always the same, "It is an incredible grace." And I mean it. People are there to confess their sins, for sure. There is something in their lives that they are not happy about, and they want to apologize for it. They want to apologize to God, and to the community.

But more than what they've done wrong, I hear people confessing how hard they are trying to live morally, and their deep desire to express love for the world with more conviction and frequency.

I'm overwhelmed by their honesty and the compassion for

the people in their lives. That's grace.

I hear about how much people love their spouses and their children. I hear about how much people love their families, especially their parents. I hear about how their relationship with God is the aspect of their lives that they hold most dear. I hear about how the love in their lives has spurred them to come to confession in the first place.

The experience of listening to the level of holiness of all these people — regular people like you and me — all walking around this Earth trying to love better, is such a humbling experience and a tremendous privilege.

Good priests do not sit in judgment of people in confession. Good priests sit in awe of the holy desires that people carry in their hearts. Good priests are so humbled to be a conduit of God's mercy, and an aid to people shedding their fear, guilt and shame.

Good confessors try to give people some strategies to see God in a more authentic way, in hopes that whatever advice they give will be something to help guide both the confessor and the penitent.

I don't know if I'm one of those good priests, but the people I meet in confession truly inspire me to be one. I aspire to approach life and those I meet with a similar holiness.

Confession is not about dirty little secrets. Confession is about the mind-boggling mercy of God, and holiness of humanity. Confession is about the deep peace that comes with reconciling with God, with those we love, and with ourselves. It is an amazing thing to be a part of.

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# 5 Ways to Prepare Your Child for First Reconciliation

Jan 19, 2015 12:00:12 PM | by Erika Marie



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## 5 ways

*to*

# Prepare Your Child

*for*

# First

# Reconciliation



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It's the time of year when many young children are preparing to soon receive their first Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a beautiful Sacrament, instituted by Christ as a way to offer us His Mercy and Grace. It is a very special time for our children and as parents, it's our primary responsibility to help prepare them for this soul-redeeming Sacrament. Here are five simple ways you can help your child prepare for their first reconciliation.

## 1. Talk about the Sacrament of Reconciliation Together

Before your child receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it's important they understand what it is and why we do it. Spend time talking with your child about this great healing Sacrament.

Read together with your child about when Jesus instituted the Sacrament and gave his apostles the authority to forgive sins in His Name in the Gospel of John 20: 19 - 23. The *Healing of a Paralytic* in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 2: 1 - 12, is also a good example of Jesus's authority to forgive sins and an example of faith and trust in His healing power.

Explain to your children that going to Confession is not about getting into trouble; it's about asking God for forgiveness and receiving God's Grace to do better. Listen to your child's questions and encourage them to learn more by asking more questions.

## 2. Examination of Conscience



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There are many great examinations around. Try and find one that your child will understand. This Examination of Conscience for Children Using the Lord's Prayer is very simple yet prods children to think more about their actions. There is also a good one based on the Ten Commandments and one for the Beatitudes.

### 3. Practice

Practice, practice, practice! Like with any sport, musical instrument, or other skill - continuous practice is essential. The same is true for preparation for all the Sacraments. The [National Catholic Register](#) has a nice and easy Confession Guide for Children that goes through a simple Examination of Conscience followed by the steps involved in a confession.

As your child's first reconciliation approaches, take time to role play with them what they will do in their real confessions. Except, you can tell them they don't have to really tell you their sins - unless of course they really want to. Maybe you'll finally find out who really took that item you've been searching everywhere for.

### 4. Go to Confession as a Family

Aside from practicing how to go to confession with your child, practice actually *going* to confession as a family. As parents, we are the first educators for our children when it comes to our Faith. However, the best way to really teach our children about the Faith is to *practice* it by living it out in our every day life. Showing your child that you can take the time to go to confession makes a deeper and longer-lasting impression than all the hours you might spend talking or reading about it with them.

Maybe even make it a family tradition, say on the first Saturday of each month or another day that works for your family. If you cannot make it during the time of regularly scheduled confessions in your parish, try a different parish nearby or ask your pastor if you can schedule a regular family confession time. Add a little fun *incentive* and go out for ice cream or grab some pizza afterwards and make it a family date night.

### 5. Pray Together

Aside from all the talking, reading, and practicing, the most essential step in preparing your child - and yourself - for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is *prayer*. Through prayer, we join in an intimate conversation with God. We ask Him to open our hearts to Him, show Him our weaknesses, and ask for His infinitely merciful forgiveness. Pray with *and* for your child, asking



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**How are you preparing your child for their First Reconciliation this Year? Do you have any other resources or books you'd recommend?**



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## Erika Marie

Erika Marie is a simple Catholic, Wife, and Mama. She relishes snuggles and free time with her family and enjoys reading, writing, blogging, and has a slightly obsessive addiction to creating Canva graphics. Enjoy more reflections by Erika at her personal [simplemama](#) blog.

## Related Blog Articles

## The Sacrament of Penance

Why must we confess our sins (at least the serious ones) to a priest? Why is it not enough to confess them directly to God (Jesus)? First note that Catholics do not tell their sins to a priest "instead of to God," but to God *through* a priest, appointed by our Lord as an official representative of Christ (*alter Christus*).

### Three basic Scripture passages underlie this practice:

1) Matt 16:18-19 "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

2) Matt 18:18 "Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

3) John 20:21-22: Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he has said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

During his life-time Christ forgave sins. Since he would not always be with the Church physically and visibly, Christ delegated this power to other men so that the Church would be able to offer forgiveness to future generations. He gave this as a communicable power to the apostles so it could be passed on to their successors, the bishops. In this passage (Jn 20:21-22) Jesus is telling the apostles to follow his own example, in delegating the power to the apostles to forgive sins.

Note that all of this is God's doing. It is He who, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself, and allowed us to minister this reconciliation of his to others (2 Cor 5:18). Indeed, confirms Paul, "We are Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor 5:20). Note also that in the anointing of the sick described in Js 5:13-15-16, it is to the presbyters of the Church the person is to be brought, and his sins will be forgiven. It is to the ordained that the sick are brought. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteousness person is very powerful." Finally, James 5:16, commands us to "confess our sins to one another."

### The witness of Tradition

Acknowledging personal sin is listed as a part of the Church's requirement by the time of



Irenaeus (130-200). Slightly later Christian writers, such as Origen (185-254), Cyprian (d.258), and Aphraates (early 300s) state clearly that confession is to be made to a priest. Cyprian writes that the forgiving of sins can take place only through the priests." Ambrose (339-397) says that "this right is given to priests only." These sayings are never seen as anything new and novel, but as reminders of accepted belief. The antiquity of this practice easily documented in Jurgens (see above in Sources).

### **Personal and Communal Sin**

### **Personal and Communal Sin**

Sin is both personal and communal. It affects me and my relationship with God. Practically, I cannot go to everyone personally and ask forgiveness, but the priest, as confessor and leader, represents the Church, the Community of Faith, which is the body of Christ. In the experience of confession I am not only asking God to forgive me, but I am also asking the same from my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Faith in Jesus opens me to receive the sign of the Father's forgiveness, healing and love each time I confess my sins this way.

### **The Belief and Need for Sacraments**

The Latin word *sacramentum* means "a sign of the sacred." The seven sacraments are ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant and important for Christians. They are special occasions for experiencing God's saving presence. That's what theologians mean when they say that sacraments are at the same time signs and instruments of God's grace.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacraments as "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is 'dispensed' to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions

The Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance, or Penance and Reconciliation) has three elements: conversion, confession and celebration. In it we find God's unconditional forgiveness; as a result we are called to forgive others.

## THE MYSTERY OF RECONCILIATION IN THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

The Father has shown forth his mercy by reconciling the world to himself in Christ and by making peace for all things on earth and in heaven by the blood of Christ on the cross. The Son of God made man lived among men in order to free them from the slavery of sin<sup>2</sup> and to call them out of darkness into his wonderful light.<sup>3</sup> He therefore began his work on earth by preaching repentance and saying: 'Turn away from sin and believe the good news' (Mark 1:15). This invitation to repentance, which had often been sounded by the prophets, prepared the hearts of men for the coming of the Kingdom of God through the voice of John the Baptist who came 'preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (Mark 1:4). Jesus, however, not only exhorted men to repentance so that they should abandon their sins and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord, but he also welcomed sinners and reconciled them with the Father. Moreover, by healing the sick he signified his power to forgive sin. Finally, he himself died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Therefore, on the night he was betrayed and began his saving passion, he instituted the sacrifice of the new covenant in his blood for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>9</sup> After his resurrection he sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, empowering them to forgive or retain sins and sending them forth to all peoples to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name.

This victory is first brought to light in baptism where our fallen nature is crucified with Christ so that the body of sin may be destroyed and we may no longer be slaves to sin, but rise with Christ and live for God. For this reason the Church proclaims its faith in 'the one baptism for the forgiveness of sins'. In the sacrifice of the Mass the passion of Christ is made present; his body given for us and his bloodshed for the forgiveness of sins are offered to God again by the Church for the salvation of the world. In the Eucharist Christ is present and is offered as 'the sacrifice which has made our peace' with God and in order that 'we may be brought together in unity'<sup>15</sup> by his Holy Spirit. Furthermore our Savior Jesus Christ, when he gave to his apostles and their successor's power to forgive sins, instituted in his Church the sacrament of penance. Thus the faithful who fall into sin after baptism may be reconciled with God and renewed in grace. The Church 'possesses both water and tears: the water of baptism, the tears of penance'.

## II. THE RECONCILIATION OF PENITENTS IN THE CHURCH'S LIFE

### **The Church is Holy but always in need of Purification**

Christ 'loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy' (Ephesians 5:25-26), and he united the Church to himself as his bride.<sup>18</sup> He filled her with his divine gifts, because she is his body and fullness, and through her he spreads truth and grace to all.

The members of the Church, however, are exposed to temptation and unfortunately often fall into sin. As a result, 'while Christ, "holy, innocent, and unstained" (Hebrews 7:26), did not know sin (2Corinthians 5:21) but came only to atone for the sins of the people (see Hebrews 2:17), the Church, which includes within itself sinners and is at the same time holy and always in need of purification, constantly pursues repentance and renewal'

### **Penance in the Church's Life and Liturgy**

The people of God accomplishes and perfects this continual repentance in many different ways. It shares in the sufferings of Christ<sup>21</sup> by enduring its own difficulties, carries out works of mercy

and charity, and adopts ever more fully the outlook of the Gospel message. Thus the people of God becomes in the world a sign of conversion to God. All this the Church expresses in its life and celebrates in the liturgy when the faithful confess that they are sinners and ask pardon of God and of their brothers and sisters. This happens in penitential services, in the proclamation of the world of God, in prayer, and in the penitential aspects of the eucharistic celebration.<sup>23</sup>

In the sacrament of penance the faithful 'obtain from the mercy of God pardon for their sins against him; at the same time they are reconciled with the Church which they wounded by their sins and which works for their conversion by charity, example, and prayer'.

### **Reconciliation with God and with the Church**

Since every sin is an offence against God which disrupts our friendship with him, 'the ultimate purpose of penance is that we should love God deeply and commit ourselves completely to him'. Therefore, the sinner who by the grace of a merciful God embraces the way of penance comes back to the Father who 'first loved us' (1 John 4: 19), to Christ who gave himself up for us,<sup>24</sup> and to the Holy Spirit who has been poured out on us abundantly.

'By the hidden and loving mystery of God's design men are joined together in the bonds of supernatural solidarity, so much so that the sin of one harms the others just as the holiness of one benefits the others'. Penance always entails reconciliation with our brothers and sisters who are always harmed by our sins. In fact, men frequently join together to commit injustice. It is thus only fitting that they should help each other in doing penance so that freed from sin by the grace of Christ they may work with all men of good will for justice and peace in the world.

### **The Sacrament of Penance and Its Parts**

6 The follower of Christ who has sinned but who has been moved by the Holy Spirit to come to the sacrament of penance should above all be converted to God with his whole heart. This inner conversion of heart embraces sorrow for sin and the intent to lead a new life. It is expressed through confession made to the Church, due satisfaction, and amendment of life. God grants pardon for sin through the Church, which works by the ministry of priests.

#### *a) Contrition*

The most important act of the penitent is contrition, which is 'heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more'. 'We can only approach the Kingdom of Christ by *metanoia*. This is a profound change of the whole person by which one begins to consider, judge, and arrange his life according to the holiness and love of God, made manifest in his Son in the last days and given to us in abundance' (see Hebrews 1 :2; Colossians 1 :19 and *passim*). The genuineness of penance depends on this heartfelt contrition. For conversion should affect a person from within so that it may progressively enlighten him and render him continually more like Christ.

#### *b) Confession*

The Sacrament of penance includes the confession of sins, which comes from true knowledge of self before God and from contrition for those sins. However, this inner examination of heart and the exterior accusation should be made in the light of God's mercy. Confession requires in the penitent the will to open his heart to the minister of God, and in the minister a spiritual judgment by which, acting in the person of Christ, he pronounces his decision of forgiveness or retention of sins in accord with the power of the keys

#### *c) Act of Penance (Satisfaction)*

True conversion is completed by acts of penance or satisfaction for the sins committed, by amendment of conduct, and also by the reparation of injury. The kind and extent of the satisfaction should be suited to the personal condition of each penitent so that each one may restore the order which he disturbed and through the corresponding remedy be cured of the sickness from which he suffered. Therefore, it is necessary that the act of penance really be a remedy for sin and a help to renewal of life. Thus the penitent, "forgetting the things which are behind him" (Philippians 3: 13), again becomes part of the mystery of salvation and turns himself toward the future.

#### *d) Absolution*

Through the sign of absolution God grants pardon to the sinner who in sacramental confession manifests his change of heart to the Church's minister, and thus the sacrament of penance is completed. In God's design the humanity and loving kindness of our Savior have visibly appeared to us, and God uses visible signs to give salvation and to renew the broken covenant. In the sacrament of penance the Father receives the repentant son who comes back to him, Christ places the lost sheep on his shoulders and brings it back to the sheepfold, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies this temple of God again or lives more fully within it. This is finally expressed in a renewed and more fervent sharing of the Lord's Table, and there is great joy at the banquet of God's Church over the son who has returned from afar.

#### **The Necessity and Benefit of the Sacrament**

Just as the wound of sin is varied and multiple in the life of individuals and of the community, so too the healing which penance provides is varied. Those who by grave sin have withdrawn from the communion of love with God are called back in the sacrament of penance to the life they have lost. And those who through daily weakness fall into venial sins draw strength from a repeated celebration of penance to gain the full freedom of the children of God.

a) To obtain the saving remedy of the sacrament of penance, according to the plan of our merciful God, the faithful must confess to a priest each and every grave sin which they remember upon examination of their conscience.

b) Moreover, frequent and careful celebration of this sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins. This is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise, but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism so that, as we bear in our body the death of Jesus Christ, his life may be seen in us ever more clearly. In confession of this kind, penitents who accuse themselves of venial faults should try to conform more closely to Christ and to follow the voice of the Spirit more attentively. In order that this sacrament of healing may truly achieve its purpose among Christ's faithful, it must take root in their whole lives and move them to more fervent service of God and neighbor. The celebration of this sacrament is thus always an act in which the Church proclaims its faith, gives thanks to God for the freedom with which Christ has made us free, and offers its life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God's glory, as it hastens to meet the Lord Jesus.

## THE BEATITUDES

*"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."*

1. The clear lesson is that if any are going to enter the kingdom of heaven they must become poor in spirit. This is the message of the kingdom; it is the call of repentance. They must humble themselves before God and acknowledge that they bring nothing of their own power, possessions or merit to gain entrance. Those who truly humble themselves and express their need of the Lord, they have the kingdom of heaven. This will open the study to themes such as humility, faith, prayer, and obedience.

*"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED."*

2. Everyone experiences sad and tragic losses at some time or another in this life. But the mourning that leads to comfort in the kingdom is a mourning over not just for the suffering and sadness of life, but for the sinfulness that causes it. So the promise is that they will be comforted. They will be consoled above all when God wipes away all tears, and death will be no more, nor grief nor tribulation. As people face the sadness of life, they can do so with hope if they have mourned over sin—a clear sign of faith in the Savior.

*"BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH."*

3. The meek do not exploit and oppress others; they are not given to vengeance and vendettas, they are not violent, and they do not try to seize power for their own ends. In short, they have emulated the nature of Jesus in their lives and learned from him. This does not mean that they are weak or ineffective in life. They may be gentle and humble, but they can and do champion the needs of the weak and the oppressed.

*"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED".*

4. This beatitude is saying much more than most people think. It is not simply describing those who are righteous, or who try to do good things. It is describing their passion in life—they hunger and thirst for it. Like the poor and the meek these people put their lives into the hand of God and hope for his help.  
We have to think about righteousness with its meaning of conforming to the standard of doing the will of God. Here the word probably has two meanings. One would certainly be in the personal life—the strong desire to be pleasing to God, to do what God wants, to live up to the will of God. But out of this would grow the desire for righteousness in the land, for social justice in a world that is unrighteous and unjust.

*"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY WILL BE SHOWN MERCY."*

5. One thing that is common to the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who hunger for righteousness is that their life is not self-sufficient but looks outward for help. They understand mercy for they know their own inadequacies, dependence, weaknesses and incompleteness. And, when they receive gracious and merciful bounty from the King, they in turn know to show mercy to others. Showing mercy to others includes both the forgiveness of the sinner and compassion for the suffering and the needy.

They are called blessed because they place showing mercy above their own rights; they take no hostile stand against people in need, but try to show kindness to others and heal wounds. It is not that they are merciful by nature, but because they have been shown mercy and live in constant dependence on the Lord.

*"BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."*

6. It describes both an inner purity and a singleness of mind. The "heart" is used in the Bible for the will, the choices. And so to be pure in heart means that the decisions one makes, the desires one has, the thoughts and intentions of the will, are untarnished by sin, and that the will is determined to be pleasing to God. From the pure of heart come only good things, acts of love and mercy, desires for righteousness and justice, decisions that please God.

And the promise for them is that they will see God. What an incredible statement! The Bible says that no one has ever seen God....

One aspect of this promise is here and now by faith—they will see God in all the events and circumstances of life. But the Bible promises much more. Here on earth the vision of God is denied to us; but one day when heaven will be opened he will be visible to our transfigured eyes.

*"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED THE SONS OF GOD."*

7. God is the God of peace; His whole plan of redemption is to provide peace with God for those who were formerly alienated from God, and ultimately bring peace to the whole world. This is the goal of the work of God. But in the human race, however, there is strife and conflict with little hope for peace and unity. The peace that God brings is not a cessation of hostilities, tolerance, or the readiness to give way. True peace that the world needs calls for a complete change of nature. And only God can give this kind of peace. It is a peace that the world does not understand. In other words, the true peacemakers are they who promote the kingdom of God. Their lives are given to working for promoting the kingdom of God, reconciling adversaries, quenching hatred, uniting those who are divided, promoting true understanding and spiritual love. And they do this because they know what true peace is. So the quality described here is one that is spiritual and not simply a political seeking of peace.

*"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF JUSTICE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."*

8. In this fallen world when people try to promote peace, or champion righteousness, or live a life of gentleness and meekness, they find opposition. One would think that such a life would attract people to the kingdom of God. But the fact that it does not naturally do that tells us clearly that the race is not only alienated from God, but in rebellion to God. They might want a form of justice, but in their own terms. They much prefer power, and privilege, and possessions. And so John the Baptist called for righteousness and went to an early death. And Jesus proclaimed all the right virtues but found opposition to his message because it called for them to enter his kingdom. The lesson would simply be that people should be living for Christ in this world, living the way members of the kingdom should live, championing righteousness and justice, showing mercy, remaining meek and poor in spirit--all the things that the beatitudes praise. But they should know that genuine righteousness is offensive to many, and so they will be prepared for opposition.



# The Joy of Forgiveness

## A quiz about Penance and Reconciliation

DAVID O'BRIEN

This quiz can help you, your students, and your students' families review what you know about our Catholic faith. Check your answers against the answer key on page 51.

**1** Before going to confession, Catholics do an examination of \_\_\_\_\_ to identify their sins and examine how they have hurt God and others.

- a) hair and teeth
- b) homework
- c) clothes
- d) conscience

**2** A \_\_\_\_\_ sin breaks one's relationship with God completely.

- a) mortal
- b) venial
- c) hidden
- d) church

**3** "For the wages of \_\_\_\_\_ is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

- a) not studying for tests
- b) bullying
- c) sin
- d) not being nice to your family

**4** During the first part of Mass, we strike our chests and pray: "Through my \_\_\_\_\_, through my \_\_\_\_\_, through my most grievous \_\_\_\_\_."

- a) thought
- b) fault
- c) brother
- d) mistake

**5** A \_\_\_\_\_ sin is not mortal (cutting one off from God), but it still damages one's soul.

- a) vanilla
- b) Venus
- c) vegetable
- d) venial

**6** If you commit a sin, but you didn't know it was wrong or you didn't mean to do it, it is still a sin and you are fully guilty.

True | False

**7** Because of the power of Christ's love in the Eucharist, \_\_\_\_\_ sins are forgiven when you are truly sorry and pray for God's mercy during Mass.

- a) baby
- b) super mean
- c) revenge
- d) venial

**8** The priest is \_\_\_\_\_ allowed to reveal the sins he hears in confession.

- a) always
- b) sometimes
- c) never
- d) reluctantly

**9** The positive \_\_\_\_\_ effects of confession include increased spiritual strength for the Christian battle.

- a) spiritual
- b) physical
- c) athletic
- d) musical

**10** \_\_\_\_\_ is an outward action that shows a change of heart away from sin and toward God.

- a) Silence
- b) Penance
- c) Giving presents
- d) Vengeance

**11** Even if you commit the same sin after confessing it, you can confess it again the next time you go.

True | False

**12** The earliest Christians believed that \_\_\_\_\_



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was the normal way to have their sins forgiven.

- a) Baptism b) death c) martyrdom  
d) First Communion

**13** Priests stand in the place of \_\_\_\_\_ and offer his forgiveness to the penitent during confession.

- a) the president b) the pastor  
c) the pope d) Jesus

**14** During the first centuries of the Church, three sins were considered virtually unforgivable: adultery, abandoning or renouncing the faith (apostasy), and \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) piercing your toenail b) lying  
c) sleeping during Mass d) murder

**15** Jesus instituted the sacrament of reconciliation by giving the Apostles the authority to forgive sins or hold people bound to their sins. True | False

**16** Common forms of penance include extra prayer, pilgrimages, fasting, charitable works, and \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) self-denial b) no water for a week  
c) going to confession d) writing "sinner" on your forehead

**17** When the priest forgives sins in confession, it is called \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) the great washing b) absolution  
c) the moment of truth d) exhilaration

**18** The \_\_\_\_\_ is the parable Jesus told about a sinful son and a forgiving father (see Luke 15:11-32).

- a) Prodigal Son b) Good Samaritan  
c) Lost Sheep d) Workers in the Vineyard

**19** The \_\_\_\_\_ wants us to avoid confession and become crippled by our guilt and sinfulness.

- a) principal b) bishop c) devil  
d) government

**20** If you turn your back on God for years but ask for God's forgiveness right before you die, God will forgive you.

True | False

## Kids' quiz

### I'm Sorry, God!

DAVID O'BRIEN

This quiz can help your students review their knowledge about our Catholic faith. Check answers with the answer key on page 51.

**1** Jesus included forgiveness and reconciliation in the \_\_\_\_\_ prayer that he taught his disciples.

- a) Hail Mary b) Our Father c) Act of Contrition  
d) Jesus

**2** \_\_\_\_\_ is a season of prayer, penance, fasting, and helping the poor.

- a) Lent b) Easter c) Christmas  
d) Summer

**3** The sacrament that invites us to confess our sins to a priest is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Matrimony b) Baptism  
c) Penance d) Confirmation

**4** If you tell God you are sorry in your heart, it is the same as going to confession.

True | False

**5** \_\_\_\_\_ is the color that represents penance at Mass.

- a) Green b) Red c) White d) Purple

**6** The purpose and effect of confession is reconciliation and a renewed friendship with \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) the saints b) God c) Santa Claus  
d) the apostles

**7** The prayer we say at the end of confession is called the \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Act of Contrition b) Our Father  
c) Hail Mary d) Memorare

**8** The Church teaches that children must receive the

sacrament of \_\_\_\_\_ before receiving their First Communion.

- a) Holy Orders b) Penance and Reconciliation  
c) Almsgiving d) Anointing of the Sick

**9** When you commit a mortal sin, you must go to confession before receiving Holy Communion again.

True | False

**10** The special prayers or actions that the priest instructs a person to do to make up for their sins at the end of their confession is called their \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) penance b) punishment  
c) penalty d) homework



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and a little goes a long way. Test it out and add more or less to your liking.

**Optional:** At this step, you could also use soap coloring (works similar to food coloring) to color your soap. Let students try mixing different combinations of colors to create a soap color of their choosing. Goat's milk soap without added color will make pure white soap bars, which is a great visual of a pure heart.

**3.** Stir the soap again. If the soap has started to cool, put it back in

the microwave for 30 seconds so that it is hot and easy to pour. Pour the hot melted soap into the silicone molds.

**4.** Allow them to cool for at least 40 minutes or even overnight, depending on how deep the mold is. Once the soap is cool, pop the bars out of the trays.

**5.** Print out the Act of Contrition cards. Laminate for durability so this can be a tool for students to use during confession. Hole punch the cards in the corner.

Use the ribbon to tie the cards to the soap to serve as a reminder that they are being washed clean by the Sacrament of Penance.

## Let us pray

Jesus, wash me clean of my sins.  
Create in me a pure heart. Amen.



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## ANSWERS TO Catholic I.Q.

From pages 46 and 47

1. d) God speaks to us through our consciences, helping us avoid evil and sinful behavior. After we sin, our consciences make us feel bad and give us the desire to fix things.
2. a) Like a mortal wound on the battlefield that kills the soldier, a mortal sin kills our soul's ability to be close to God until we get rid of that sin through confession.
3. c) St. Paul warned the Romans that if they kept habitually sinning, it will result in an awful life and eventually completely separate them from God.
4. b) Recognizing that we sin is the first step to realizing how much we need God's forgiveness.
5. d) Venial sins compromise your integrity and create habits of vice, not virtue, eventually leading to mortal sins (see CCC, 1863).
6. False. "Mortal sin requires full knowledge and complete consent. It presupposes knowledge of the sinful character of the act, of its opposition to God's law" (CCC, 1859).
7. d) "As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away venial sins" (CCC, 1394).
8. c) "The secret of the sacrament of reconciliation is sacred, and cannot be violated. . . . It is a crime for a confessor in any way to betray a penitent for any reason" (CCC, 2490).
9. a) Confession gives us grace to avoid our previous sins and instead to choose what is good, right, holy, and beautiful.
10. b) Penance helps make real our conversion to Christ. Just as "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26), so also repentance without penance is dead.
11. True. Jesus said we should forgive others seven times 70 times because he knew that the Father will

always forgive us, even if we struggle with the same sins all our lives.

12. a) Baptism forgives all sins and is necessary for salvation (see CCC, 980). In the early centuries of the Church, sins committed after Baptism required a public confession, sometimes harsh public penances, and they could only be forgiven by the Apostles or their successors, the bishops.
13. d) Because of his ordination, the priest acts in *persona Christi*, or in the person of Christ, with all Christ's power and authority to forgive sins in confession (see CCC, 1548).
14. d) All three of these sins violated the sacred trust of the community. For the first Christians who could be arrested, tortured, and killed for their faith, being able to trust everyone within the Church was a nonnegotiable.
15. True. When Jesus appeared to the Apostles after the Resurrection, he said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:23).
16. a) Voluntary self-denial breaks our addictions to earthly comfort, reminds us of our weakness, and turns a sacrifice into a prayer of remorse and contrition.
17. b) The priest absolves our sins, which means that we are released from guilt and punishment because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.
18. a) God is like the forgiving father who is more focused on his son's repentance and his coming home and being part of the family than he is on his son's sins.
19. c) By his cross, Jesus has already paid the price for our sins, so we are forgiven and free no matter how bad we have messed up. Satan wants us to feel unforgivable and trapped in our sins.
20. True. No one knows for certain how God judges us, but Jesus forgave anyone who repented, even the thief on the cross. Jesus said: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

## Kids' Quiz

1. b) "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).
2. a) Lent invites us to repent of our sins, forgive those who have hurt us, and repair any broken relationships with our friends or family.
3. c) We tell our sins to a priest in confession because he stands in the place of Christ, who is the one who forgives our sins and washes our souls clean.
4. False. God always forgives us when we repent, but going to confession assures us of God's forgiveness and his help to avoid sinning the same way again in the future. (For more benefits of the sacrament, see CCC, 1496.)
5. d) The priests wear purple and the altar cloth is purple during the seasons of penance in the Church such as Lent.
6. b) Sin comes between us and God, damaging our relationship with him. A good confession restores our intimate friendship with God (see CCC, 1468).
7. a) The Act of Contrition allows us to speak words of regret for our sins and to ask God to help us not to sin again.
8. b) Baptism cleanses one of all previous sins. However, if one was baptized as a baby, he or she has probably sinned since then and therefore is expected to go to confession to prepare to receive Christ at their First Communion (see CCC, 1457).
9. True. "Anyone who is aware of having committed a mortal sin must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution" (CCC, 1457).
10. a) Doing penance allows us to do something concrete to express how sorry we are for our sins. Penance also shows that we don't want to sin again in the same way.