



Archdiocese
of Toronto

Belief Brief - Why do I Need to Go to Confession?

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Reflection

Why Do I Need to Go to Confession?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the sacrament of God's mercy, a sacrament of healing.

Some may ask, "How is confession related to healing?"

When we hurt others or ourselves, something is taken from others and us: joy, peace, or a relationship. *Although the need for healing does not imply the need for forgiveness, all need for forgiveness implies the need for healing.*

In this sacrament, Jesus himself is present in the priest, forgiving us and absolving us of our sins, leading to spiritual healing and growth.

There are different sins with various consequences. Some of our sins are venial or less serious. For example, we may be impatient or undisciplined with certain actions. These actions or words do not cause grave harm, but they can weaken us, and our ability to respond to God's grace.

Left unchecked, they can become habitual or more serious. Some sins are very serious or grave, meaning, they are committed with full knowledge and freedom.

These sins rupture our relationship with God because we have hurt ourselves or damaged another person with our anger, jealousy, despair, undisciplined desires or fear. These sins must be confessed to a priest.

They are like the health issues that brings us to an emergency room of a local hospital, requiring urgent care before they do more damage.

Confession gives us the opportunity to be honest with our actions, to show we are sincerely sorrowful for them, and to be open to God's healing grace. This involves doing our best to repair any damage that has been done, and resolve not to sin again.

Although we are required to confess our sins at least once a year, more often for serious or mortal sins, frequent confession encourages us to examine our conscience and our behaviour, keeping us humble and self-aware.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation confers God's grace. It is the medicine that heals our souls and strengthens us for the journey ahead. This is why we must go to confession.

Jesus is the physician who heals us and restores us to divine health. Do not be afraid to approach him!

Sources from Scripture and Tradition

1. **The teachings of Jesus on forgiveness:**
John 8: 3-11 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_P_XG.HTM
2. **Pope Francis. Selected Quotations and reflections on Confession in “*The Beauty of Mercy: Pope Francis and Confession.*” © 2016 Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.**
3. **Pope Benedict, “Why go to Confession? in *24 Hours for the Lord: March 4-5, 2016, published by The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Evangelization, pp. 7-8***
(accessed from
www.im.va/content/damn/gdm/documenti/pdfvari/24HoursForTheLord.pdf)

Teaching from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Confession:

1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part II, paragraph numbers 1422 -1498.

The English translation may be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGO015/_P46.HTM

See especially “In Brief,” paragraphs 1485-1498 :

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGO015/_P4I.HTM

The Catechism is available in 9 languages. For the complete list and links, go to:

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm>

2. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Questions 296-312

The English translation may be found here:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc_documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

The Compendium is available in 14 languages. For the complete list and links, go to:
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm>

3. *YouCat: Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*, with a Foreword by Pope Benedict XVI. © 2011, *Ignatius Press*, Questions 224-239, pp.133-140.
<https://www.ignatius.com/promotions/youcat>

Reflection

It must be emphasized that the most precious result of the forgiveness obtained in the sacrament of penance consists in reconciliation with God, which takes place in the inmost heart of the son who was lost and found again, which every penitent is. But it has to be added that this reconciliation with God leads, as it were, to other reconciliations which repair the breaches caused by sin. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his own true identity. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way attacked and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation.

As a result of an awareness of this, at the end of the celebration there arises in the penitent a sense of gratitude to God for the gift of divine mercy received, and the Church invites the penitent to have his sense of gratitude.

Every confessional is a special and blessed place from which, with divisions wiped away, there is born here and uncontaminated a reconciled individual – a reconciled world!

- From St. John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance*, 31.5
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html

For Further Reading

1. Thomas Cardinal Collins, “Reconciliation.” In *Cornerstones of Faith: Reconciliation, Eucharist and Stewardship*. © 2013, St. Augustine’s Seminary. Published by Novalis. www.novalis.ca. Pp. 8-37.
2. “Forgiveness and Reconciliation.” Liturgical Leaflet, edited by the National Liturgy Office, and published by Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Copyright © Concacan Inc., 1983, 2002. All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced for personal of parish use. For commercial license, please contact the publisher. Last Updated on Friday, March 5, 2010.
http://www.cccb.ca/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2334&Itemid=1226&lang=en

3. *Celebrating Reconciliation*, edited by the National Liturgy Office, and published by Publications Service, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Copyright © Concacan Inc., 2006. All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced for personal or parish use. For commercial license, please contact the publisher. Last Updated on Friday, March 5, 2010.
http://www.cccb.ca/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2335&Itemid=1172&lang=eng
4. Archdiocese of Toronto Day of Confessions
Resources include: Parish Resources, Frequently Asked Questions, How to Go to Confession, etc.
<https://www.archtoronto.org/confession>