

CATHOLIC TIMES

MAGAZINE OF THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

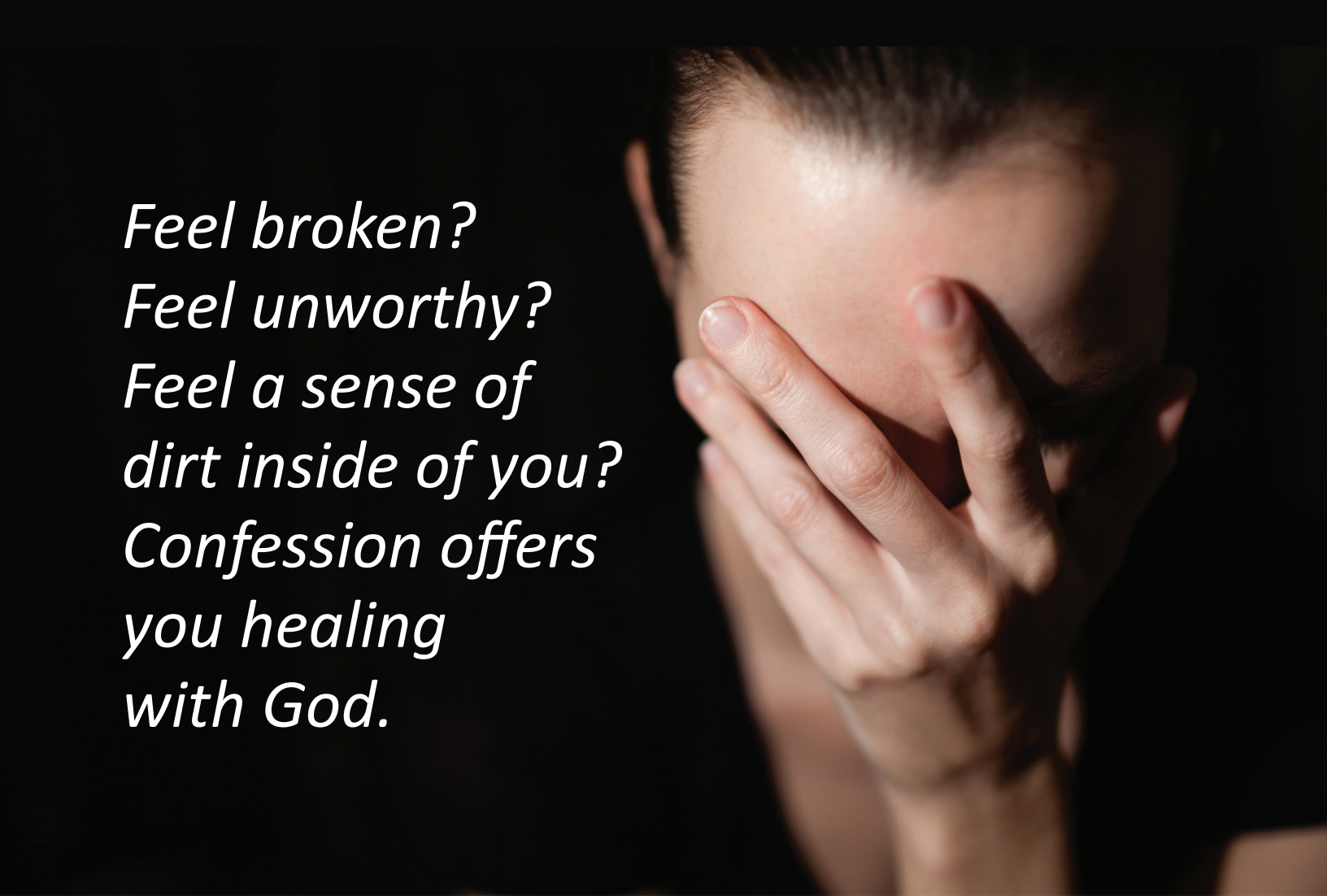
JULY 25, 2021

What's
missing
here is
YOU



- ◆ Why you should go to confession
- ◆ A step-by-step process on how to go to confession
- ◆ Scared to go to confession? We've got you covered
- ◆ What our priests think when hearing a confession
- ◆ Where can I go to confession?

**SPECIAL
EDITION**



*Feel broken?
Feel unworthy?
Feel a sense of
dirt inside of you?
Confession offers
you healing
with God.*

CONFESSION: A sacrament that is exactly what you need

By **ANDREW HANSEN**
Editor

Bless me Father, for I have sinned, it has been How long has it been since your last confession? For most Catholics, their frequency to this sacrament is anything but frequent. Some go often, some go every year, while some have not been in decades. Are you one of them? Do you think, “What is the point? Why can’t I just confess my sins directly

to God?” Are you fearful of going? Are you afraid you do not know what to do? Do you just need some inspiration?

In the following pages, priests of our diocese will explain the why, how, and where to go to confession. They will offer you words of encouragement and inspiration to lift you up so you can take advantage of this incredible treasure our Catholic faith offers, a treasure of forgiveness from God.

God loves you beyond our understanding. He stands ready to forgive — no matter how long it has been since your last confession and no matter how bad your sins are. Pouring out the dregs of your soul, even just stepping into the confessional, can be an intimidating and scary experience, but remember what lies on the other side: complete forgiveness, healing, a fresh start of renewal, and your relationship with God restored. ✠

CONFESSION

Why do I have to go to a priest for God to forgive my sins? Why can't I just tell God directly?



One of Jesus' key ministries was the forgiveness of sins, something He often associated with simultaneous miracles of physical healing. See Lk 5:17-26, where Jesus forgives the paralytic his sins, and then heals his paralysis. Every time He forgave, Jesus personally, intimately, and life-changingly encountered the person suffering from their sins, and this is something He wants to do for us as well! By His death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed us, conquering sin and death, and He wanted this healing and forgiving ministry to continue, so he entrusted it to the Apostles and consequently, to the Church.

One Scripture basis for the sacrament of penance is John 20:19-23, when on Easter night, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the Disciples and told them, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." The words of absolution said by the priest in the sacrament are rooted in this Scripture. "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (*Rite of Penance*, 46.)

The priest in the confessional, in the sacrament of penance, is *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ, as in all sacraments. It is Christ who absolves. It

is Christ who baptizes. It is Christ who offers himself on the altar at Mass. So, when penitents come to the sacrament, they are in fact confessing to God, Christ Jesus, in and through the person of the priest. This is going directly to God, as you say in your question.

Why is this manner of confessing helpful? Here we return to the bedrock truth of the Christian faith. God became one with us in the flesh, in His incarnation. God did not just will our redemption and accomplish it by thinking it. He sent his Son, in the flesh, to personally encounter us, to save us by his death and resurrection.

So, think of it in terms of your marriage. You did not become married just by thinking it. You said your intentions publicly, out loud to your spouse. Your words, your consent, your two-become-one, make the sacrament. It is incarnational; you are husband and wife in the flesh. When there is a rift in your marriage, when you wronged your spouse, you need to say, "I am sorry." Sure, you can think of how sorrowful or remorseful you are, and you can presume your spouse's forgiveness, but the rift is not really healed until words of sorrow are expressed and you

hear the words, "I accept your apology and forgive you." It is a personal, direct encounter. It is sorrow incarnated.

The way that God created our humanity—body, soul, mind, and strength—means that we need to outwardly, verbally express both our love and our sorrow. I encourage you to go to confession so you can name your sins and express sorrow to Jesus in the person of the priest and hear his healing words of mercy. ✠

Father Joe Ring is pastor at Our Saviour Parish in Jacksonville. This originally appeared in *Catholic Times* in 2019.

CONFESSION

It has been a long time since I have been to confession. Before I even go, what should I do first?

From my experience as a confessor and one who also goes to confession regularly, a good preparation before confession is the key to making a good confession. Think about any time you have had to have a serious conversation with somebody, especially one that might be difficult. There is no way you would go into that conversation unprepared. The anxiety of the situation could seriously compromise your ability to get your points across. But, if you prepare ahead of time, even though the nerves are there, you will be in a much better position to communicate your message.

We all know how nervous we can get when we go to confession, so preparing ahead of time will enable us to better confess our sins despite our anxiety. Furthermore, the Church asks us that we make an integral confession, which means making as complete of a confession as possible. Just trying to think of some sins a minute or two before confession is not sufficient.

So how does one prepare, especially if it has been a while? The first thing to do is to say a prayer to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to shed light on those areas of your life where you need forgiveness. Then, it can be helpful to use an *Examination of Conscience* guide to help you identify and name your sins. You can look one up on the internet or check out the one on page 10. Make a good preparation and come receive God's mercy in your nearest confessional! ✠

Father Brian Alford is rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield and is the vocations director for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.



Holy Trinity Parish Annual Steak Dinner

Sunday, Aug. 1

DRIVE THRU PICKUP 10:30 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.

Tickets being pre-sold only

Limited quantity available

Tickets \$15 each ~ Kids' meal ticket free

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Stonington Village Hall, Stonington Library
or contact parish via Facebook Messenger
@ Holy Trinity Catholic Church**

No tickets sold day of event



CONFESSION

Do an examination of conscience based on the Ten Commandments to help you prepare for confession and name your sins



I I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.
Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God?

II You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people made in His image and likeness?

III Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on holy days of obligation? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship of God, joy for the Lord's Day, and proper relaxation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

IV Honor your father and your mother.
Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Or do I criticize

them needlessly, perhaps for lacking skills I think they should have?

V You shall not kill.
Have I harmed anyone through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

VI You shall not commit adultery.
Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others, and of myself?

VII You shall not steal.
Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

VIII You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another?

IX You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.
Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

X You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.
Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily? †

How well do we love God and others? Do we love as Christ calls us to?

In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ gives us two Commandments: "He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments'" (Mt 22:37-40).

Not sure what love is? St. Paul describes it for us in his First Letter

to the Corinthians. Is this how you love God and others? "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Cor 13:4-8). †

GOING TO CONFESSION: A st



1. PREPARATION:

Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer asking the Holy Spirit to shine His light into your heart. Ask that you can see yourself, and your life, since your last confession as He sees you. Then ask yourself whether you have — in your thoughts, words, and actions — neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this examination of conscience, you might



review the Ten Commandments or the *Beatitudes* (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26). Or review an *Examination of Conscience* guide you can find online or on page 10 in this edition of *Catholic Times*. If you need to, you can jot down some notes to keep from forgetting anything that has surfaced during your examination but finish your examination either way with a prayer of gratitude to God and be at peace as you head to the confessional. When you enter the confessional, you can choose to say your confession behind the screen or face-to-face depending on whichever way will best allow you to encounter God’s mercy in the sacrament.

2. GREETING:

The priest might say words of welcome to you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage. More often than not, however, he will go right to step #3.

3. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS:

Together, you and the priest will make the *Sign of the Cross*. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.” Note, some priests may not say anything at all at the beginning. If that is the case, do not hesitate to begin with that and say “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”

4. CONFESSION:

Confess all your sins to the priest. Try to be as specific as possible. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help and know that if he would like more clarity on something, he will gently ask you for more details. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.” Note, you can write down your sins on paper and read them



if that helps you. However, after confession, you are to destroy the paper as soon as possible as these sins have been forgiven and are no longer part of your life.

5. PENANCE:

The priest may first counsel you on how to better live a Christian life and may ask you some questions. Then, he will offer to you some act of penance. It might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. You will know this step because the priest will say, “For your penance” Just remember to do your act of penance!

6. ACT OF CONTRITION:

After the priest has given you your penance, he will ask you to pray an *Act of Contrition* out loud. A suggested *Act of Contrition* you can pray is below but know that you can also simply pray from your heart a prayer expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more.

“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

ep-by-step guide on how to do it



response would be, “His mercy endures forever” (*Rite of Penance*, no. 47). Note, some priests omit this, or may use another phrase to offer God thanks for His mercy.

9. DISMISSAL:

The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.” You can thank the priest.

10. PENANCE:

After confession, spend time in quiet prayer in the church, especially if given a penance of prayer. Thank God for His unconditional love and forgiveness! ✠

This list is reprinted with permission from the USCCB. See more information and resources about confession at usccb.org/confession.



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 of Penance*, no. 45)

7. ABSOLUTION:

The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. He will say:

“God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

You respond, “Amen.”


8. PRAISE:

The priest may then 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

Diocese of Belleville

POSITION AVAILABLE

Director of Hispanic Ministry



The Diocese of Belleville is seeking a full-time Director of Hispanic Ministry to promote the full participation and integration of Hispanic Catholics in the life of the Church in Southern Illinois. The Director of Hispanic Ministry promotes this goal by supporting parishes, schools, and agencies in developing faith formation, pastoral leadership, and evangelization ministries that serve the needs of Hispanic people. The Director also engages in strategic planning, develops leaders, fosters communication, and advocates for the needs of Hispanic people and families.

Essential qualifications include being a practicing Catholic; Bachelor’s Degree; five years of related experience; and bilingual Spanish/English. Graduate Degree in theology or ministry strongly preferred. Intermediate skill with Microsoft Office products and social media preferred.

TO APPLY: Send resume, cover letter, and references to Human Resources, Diocese of Belleville, 222 South Third Street, Belleville, IL 62220 or email humanresources@diobelle.org
Application Deadline: Aug. 1, 2021.



CONFESSION

How the parable of the prodigal son can help you as you think about going to confession

We know in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) what each son does and where each ends up. We know how the Father offers unconditional love and compassion. But do we know where we are in the story? Do we know that, at any point in our story, we too could turn back to the Father's embrace?

The younger son initially turns from the father's love for wealth. Of course, the cash made a poor replacement for his father's care. The frivolous spending could not fill him as his sonship could have. Then, there was the faraway haunt, a lousy substitute for the father's house. Then, the food inevitably turned to famine, and then pig-fodder, nothing like the feasting offered back home. Greed became sloth, and sloth sunk into lust, and lust into gluttony and the son drifted ever further from home, devouring his inheritance in a life of dissipation.

Have you or I ever become more worried about our money, stuff, and possessions, than receiving the Father's love? Have we ever sought comfort rather than communion? Have we turned our back on the place where God dwells, choosing our own way, our own freedom, our own direction

instead of remaining in His house, and living according to His desires? Have we ever gobbled up whatever

we could get our hands on, rather than trusting what God has provided us?

I have. The question is: Amid my greed, or sloth, or lust, or gluttony, do I turn back to the Father's love? Do I believe He is waiting to embrace me every single time? Do I let my sin and shame propel me back down the road to Dad? Do I place my sins before Him and look again into His eyes and discover His mercy?

The older son does not choose the inheritance over his father: he works hard, he stays close, and he is content with what the father provides. But he turns from the father's love, not exteriorly, but interiorly, not in choosing wealth, but in choosing wrath.

The simple serenity of the son coming from the fields becomes anger. "Why does dad care about that brat?" Then, as his father remonstrates with him, his trust has been twisted into jealousy. "I served you. I obeyed you, but you didn't even give me a goat, and you've thrown a feast for that profligate." His conceit and arrogance are just below the surface: "I have done the right thing. When do I get my

reward?" Anger becomes envy, and envy becomes pride, and the elder son is not far from demanding his share, and stomping off to a faraway country, starting the cycle of sin all over again.

But haven't we done the same? Have you or I ever let anger poison our trust or envy destroy our happiness? Have we held sins against another that God has forgiven? Have we resented a blessing that God has given to someone else? Have we comforted ourselves in comparing our virtue to their vice? Have we refused the Father's invitation to joy, to peace, to come home, because someone is there who does not deserve His gifts?

I have. The question is: Amid my anger, or envy, or pride, do I turn back to the Father's love? Do I go back home? Do I enjoy the feast? Do I embrace my brother? Do I reject the anger, and replace it with gratitude? Do I place my sins before Him, and look again into His eyes, and discover His mercy?

The Father waits for us, wherever we are. Run to His embrace. ✠

Father Dominic Rankin is Master of Ceremonies and priest secretary for Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, is an associate vocations director for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, and has a license in Theology of Marriage and Family from the John Paul II Institute in Rome.

CONFESSION

Need some inspiration?

“

Our Lord Himself I saw in this venerable Sacrament ... I felt as if my chains fell, as those of St. Peter at the touch of the Divine messenger. My God, what new scenes for my soul!

— *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*

”

“

The confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works.

— *St. Augustine*

”

“

Confession is the soul's bath. Even a clean and unoccupied room gathers dust; return after a week and you will see that it needs dusting again!

— *St. Padre Pio*

”

“

Confession is an act of honesty and courage — an act of entrusting ourselves, beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and forgiving God.

— *Pope St. John Paul II*

”

“

When I go to confession, it is in order to be healed, to heal my soul. To leave with greater spiritual health. To pass from misery to mercy.

— *Pope Francis*

”

“

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

— *Matthew 11:28*

”

Protecting God's Children for Adults®

DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS ~ OFFICE FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Protecting God's Children for Adults® is a child sexual abuse prevention program offered by the diocese to instruct Church personnel on the prevention of child sexual abuse and the steps to creating a safe environment for the protection of children and young people. All Church personnel are required to attend a Protecting God's Children for Adults training session. See dio.org/safeenvironment for a description of Church personnel.

Date	Weekday	Time	Training Site
Aug. 3	Tuesday	6-9 p.m.	Newton, 501 W. Jourdan St., St. Thomas the Apostle Church Church Office, (618) 783-3517, (618) 783-8741
Aug. 5	Thursday	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Highland, 1412 9th St., St. Paul Parish Ctr., (John Room) Church Office, (618) 654-2339
Nov. 4	Thursday	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Highland, 1412 9th St., St. Paul Parish Ctr., (John Room) Church Office, (618) 654-2339

Please call the contact number of the training site to register your attendance. The training sessions are typically 2 ½ to 3 hours. Compliance with the training requirement requires a participant be present for the entire session. There is no fee for attending the training session. Because of the sensitive nature of the training topic children under the age of 18 should not be in attendance.

CONFESSION

'Burden lifted.' Three things to keep in mind that can help alleviate your fear of going to confession

My sophomore year of college, a fraternity buddy invited me to a retreat, and I begrudgingly said "yes." I am really glad I went, because I went to confession for the first time in a long time. After confessing all my sins and by the grace of God holding nothing back, I remember a brief silence. Was the priest mad? Was he going to tell me I should leave the retreat? I still remember looking up and him smiling, then he said, "Burden lifted" and offered me pen-

ance and absolution. That encounter with God's mercy changed the whole direction of my life. I wanted to get to know Jesus after that, and I wanted others to know him and His mercy.

Here are a few things I think we all need to be reminded of from time to time about going to confession:

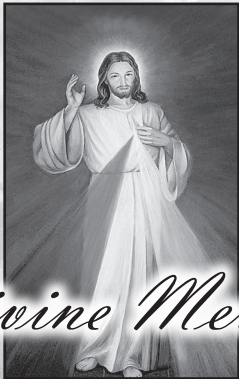
- 1 Be direct and totally honest: You will not scandalize or startle a priest, no matter what you bring to the confessional. My favorite description of a priest is "God's garbage man." Name your sins specifically and tell the priest how many times they happened. You are good and created in God's image, let the garbage man take care of the sins.
- 2 The priest will never reveal your sins. Ever. Every Catholic priest is bound by what is called the seal of confession. He would go to jail or even give his life before he revealed anything said in confession. Under no circumstances is the seal permitted to be broken.

- 3 Think of confession like a car wash. If you ever take your car through the mud, you get it to the wash right away. Or, if it has just been a while, it is still good to take it to the wash. If you believe yourself to be in a state of serious sin, be brave and go to confession right away. Or if it has been several months (or years!), it is still good to go and totally appropriate to bring smaller things as well, what are called venial sins. Just be sure to confess anything you know to be seriously sinful.

God wants to offer us His mercy, He literally died to do so. Go to confession, do not worry about doing it perfectly. I try to go every couple weeks, and honestly, I still get nervous most the time, so I just take a deep breath and remember Father saying, "Burden lifted." ✠

Father Rob Johnson is pastor at Perpetual Help in Maryville, chaplain at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, and associate director for the Office for Vocations for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

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CONFESSION

After absolution and having completed our penance, are we completely sinless at that time and point?

Yes, I am happy to say, that after confessing your sins and receiving absolution (“I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”), all your sins are forgiven.

Of course, there is more to the answer than just that. First of all, the priest’s absolution depends on the penitent’s true sorrow for their sins, at least to the level of “imperfect contrition,” that is, they are sorry to have committed the sins they did and have the intention to not do so again (along with some notion of how they might successfully avoid the occasions or their own particular weaknesses that could lead back into sin).

A second such factor is their completing the penance that the priest had assigned to them. This is not some kind of repayment that the penitent makes in order to be forgiven (hence why, even before he completes the penance, as long as he does not intentionally omit it, he is already forgiven of his sins). But, if the truest grace of the sacrament of reconciliation is reconciliation with God, the penance we do afterwards is a sign that God’s grace has sunk deeply into our soul. It is the natural response to having been given the grace of forgiveness, hence restoration in God’s friendship, as well as healing and strength to go forward.

However, a third piece here also becomes evident. Confession is not just for the purposes of reconciliation with God, but also reconciliation with the

Church, Christ’s mystical body. That is why Christ entrusts this grace to the sacrament and His priests. They stand in His place, binding and loosing as He gives them authority and simultaneously symbolizing the reality that our sins also injure our brothers and sisters around us. Confession offers us the profound and important action of another human being that we are sorry for having caused such damage.

The *Catechism* puts it this way: “Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.” More fully, there are “two equally essential elements: on the one hand, the acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God’s action through the intervention of the Church. The Church, who through the bishop and his priests forgives sins in the name of Jesus Christ and determines the manner of satisfaction, also prays for the sinner and does penance with him.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1445 and 1448)

Penance, done by the penitent (and the priest, a little-known way that the priest cares for his spiritual children), is thus not only the proper response to God’s gift of absolution (the gift of sinlessness), but a small making-up-for the damage done by our sin on our end (the return gift of satisfaction).

So, absolution leaves us sinless, and penance means we made satisfaction,

but there is still residual damage — perhaps both spiritual and physical, in ourselves or others — that remains. “Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused.” To give an example, if absolution is like the father forgiving his son for having broken a window, and penance is like the boy sweeping up the broken glass, what the Church calls the “temporal punishment due to sin” is the still-broken window that remains after all of that. In the same way, even after we are sinless, and have made some satisfaction, there is still damage done that has not been made-up-for.

What the Church calls indulgences remedies some of this, as does our sacrifices, offered-up-sufferings, and acts of reparation of all sorts (prayer, acts of charity, time spent in adoration). But some of this damage remains to be purified by the fire of God’s love outside of this life in Purgatory, where we will not only be purified of any remaining venial sins, but also every disordered attachment that still gets between us and a pure love of God or neighbor, there God will heal every wound in us and in His Body the Church. ✠

Father Dominic Rankin is associate vocation director for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, priest secretary and Master of Ceremonies to the diocesan bishop, and has a license in Theology of Marriage and Family from the John Paul II Institute in Rome. This originally appeared in *Catholic Times* in 2020.

CONFESSION



I am discouraged that I confess the same sins over and over when I go to confession. What advice do you have for me?

First, we look for God's grace. As sin tends to shame us into silence and then convince us to quit the spiritual struggle altogether, that you acknowledge discouragement and ask for help prove God is already subverting the cycle of sin you mention.

Second, it is vital we familiarize ourselves with our ascetic tradition. By closely reading the Scriptures and vigilantly observing the human person, the Church has developed means to accurately diagnose and interrupt the progress of temptation.

For example, early Christian ascetics identified five progressive stages of evil as well as possible remedies to halt their advancement. Memorizing both the stages and their remedies will assist us immensely when tempted. They are:

1. Suggestion: Our first contact with the image, fantasy, or urge to do evil always presents itself in a pleasing manner. We cannot rid ourselves of these fleeting thoughts, but we choose whether to let them pass by or to entertain them.

Remedy: Ignore them. Busy yourself with something else and they will depart.

"Keep your mind warm with holy thoughts," counsels St. Ephraim. "If the soup is hot, the fly won't land in it."

2. Conversation: But we do not always ignore them. Instead, we converse with the suggestion as Eve did with the serpent. We let ourselves be provoked by it and then begin reflecting on it. All day long we may consider the person who wronged us that morning. If there is no decision, there is no sin. But much time and vital energy has been wasted on these inner dialogues.

Remedy: Continue the dialogue but change partners; instead of talking to yourself, talk to Christ. Reveal the conversation to Him and see where the discussion goes.

3. Struggle: A suggestion grown through conversation has wormed its way into the heart and is now a struggle. It will not be easily dispelled, but with much exertion it can be done.

Remedy: Hold firm and prayerfully repeat: "Jesus, you do not want this for me; neither do I. I freely decide the opposite." Or "God come to my assistance; Lord, make hast to help me!"

4. Consent: If the will surrenders to the struggle and consents to the suggestion of evil, one sins.

Remedy: Make an Act of Contrition. Go to confession if necessary. Let God love you in this moment of weakness.

5. Passion: The final and most tragic stage, passion indicates the continual consent to evil which weakens both the will and the character of the person. Sin becomes something like an addiction, and the sinner a slave to it.

Remedy: The will needs to be re-awoken. Devote yourself to prayer, the sacramental life of the Church, and seek help if needed. Some passions can't be overcome alone.

God desires our freedom from sin. Knowing the cycle of evil and patiently sabotaging it at every step will go a long way in living into that freedom. ✠

Father Seth Brown is pastor of Mother of Dolours in Vandalia and St. Joseph in Ramsey. He is also chaplain of Our Sorrowful Mother's Ministry, chaplain of the Vandalia Correctional Center, and research theologian for the Diocesan Curia.



CONFESSION

A view from the other side of the screen

'Confession is a lot like flossing your teeth'

I had been a priest for a very short time when I was in the old-style confessional on a Saturday afternoon. A young family came in and the mother and the father went into the two side doors. Their young son, who had received his first Communion recently, not knowing quite what the procedure was, opened the middle door. And there I was! We began the ritual, and I was overwhelmed by his childlike innocence and complete trust in God's mercy and love. That child opened my heart to love this sacrament more than ever.

The Father invites us to come, sit in his lap, and experience his love and mercy. As a priest, I am there not to judge or to reprimand, but to forgive in God's name and on behalf of the Church. When I am in the confessional, I experience peace as penitents are reconciled. It fills my heart with joy. Some come to confession carrying heavy burdens of sin and guilt. In the words of absolution all that melts away. The words, "I absolve you from your sins" are powerful and affirming. There is nothing else like it.

I am humbled by the power bestowed on me in my priesthood ordination. I can still feel the coolness of the marble at the Cathedral as I lay prostrated during the *Litany of Saints*. I still feel the strong hands of Bishop Joseph McNicholas on my head. I still can smell the sweetness of the sacred chrism as my hands were anointed for service. I still feel the warmth of the embraces as my fellow priests welcomed me. But most of all I remember were the tears that flowed for three days as my heart was so full of joy that I thought it would burst. I was a priest! I had the privilege and the power to be able to stand at the altar for the rest of my life as I would take bread in my hands and say, "This

is my body," and take the cup of wine and say, "This is my blood." I had the privilege and the power to welcome sinners and declare, "I absolve you."

The gift of being able to confect the Eucharist and to absolve sins as an *alter Christi*, another Christ, still brings tears to my eyes.

The ability to hold in my hands the very body and blood of Jesus and to extend my hands over a penitent in absolution continues to make me shudder at the power of God working through me. I stand in awe!

I know that it is hard to admit that I am a sinner, especially to another person. Frequent confession and a regular confessor have helped me. Several years ago, I received a young woman into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. She is a dentist and told me, "You know Father, confession is like flossing your teeth. You hate to do it, but afterward you feel so much better." She is my dentist to this very day. Such insight!

Someone asked me one time if hearing all these sins depressed me or if it changed the way I viewed someone. I told them that I focus not on the sins, but rather on the mercy and love of God. I listen to the sins since there might be something that we need to discuss, but what I really listen for is sorrow for sin, and what I experience again and again is the overwhelming power of Divine Mercy.

A couple of years ago I was sitting at the bedside of a dear friend as she was



dying. She was surrounded by family and friends. At one point she asked them all to leave so that she could talk to me privately. When she asked me to hear her confession the tears started as I realized that I was in a grace filled moment of a death bed confession. I was overwhelmed by her childlike innocence and her complete trust in God's mercy and love. A few hours later she breathed her last, at peace with God. It is very humbling to be able to be part of such incredible moments.

The incredible moments continue to happen as people come with their burdens trusting in God. I always give thanks to God for his love as I stand in awe before such a powerful and beautiful sacrament. The grace given on that first Easter Sunday in the upper room when Jesus said, "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven," continues to give life to the Church. ✠

Father Donald Wolford is pastor at Holy Angels Parish in Wood River.

CONFESSION

OK. I am ready to go to confession! Where can I go?



Remember, you can always call a parish and schedule your confession with a priest if these days and times do not fit your schedule.

SPRINGFIELD

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Sunday, 4-4:45 p.m.
Monday-Friday, 4:15-5 p.m.
Saturday, 9-10 a.m., 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Blessed Sacrament

Monday-Friday, 7:30-7:45 a.m.
Saturday, 7:30 a.m.-7:45 a.m., 3-4 p.m.

Christ the King

Sunday, 4-4:45 p.m.
Monday-Friday, 6:30 a.m.-6:50 a.m., Wednesday, 5-5:45 p.m.
Saturday, 3-4 p.m.

Little Flower

Saturday, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

St. Agnes

Saturday, 3-4 p.m.

St. Aloysius

Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.

St. Joseph

Saturday, 3:15-4 p.m.

St. Katharine Drexel (Sacred Heart and St. Patrick churches)

Before all Masses, seven days a week

ALEXANDER

Visitation BMV
Saturday, 3-4 p.m.

ALTON

St. Mary
First Friday, 4-5 p.m.
Saturday, 4-5 p.m.; 7-8 p.m.
Ss. Peter and Paul
Saturday, 3:15-3:45 p.m.

ARCOLA

St. John the Baptist
Thursday, 6:45 p.m.

ARENZVILLE

St. Fidelis
Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.

AUBURN

Holy Cross
Sunday, 7:30-8 a.m.

BEARDSTOWN

St. Alexius
Third Sunday of the month, 6 p.m.
Thursday, 6 p.m.

BETHALTO

Our Lady Queen of Peace
Monday, available 45 minutes before Mass
Saturday, 3:30-4:15 p.m.

BETHANY

St. Isidore
Sunday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.
Tuesday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.
Saturday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.

BRUSSELS

St. Mary
Saturday, 5:45-6 p.m.

CAMP POINT

St. Thomas
First Fridays, 5-5:45 p.m.

CHATHAM

St. Joseph the Worker
Saturday, 3:45-4:30 p.m.

COLLINSVILLE

Ss. Peter and Paul
Saturday, 3-3:30 p.m.

DECATUR

Holy Family
Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.
Our Lady of Lourdes
Tuesday, 12-1 p.m.
Thursday, 5-6 p.m.
Saturday, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Ss. James and Patrick

Monday, 7:30-7:45 a.m. at St. James
Wednesday, 7:30-7:45 a.m. at St. James
Friday, 10:30-11 a.m. at St. Patrick

Saturday, 11-noon at St. Patrick;
3:15-3:40 p.m. at St. James

St. Thomas the Apostle

Saturday, 3 p.m.

DIETERICH

St. Isidore the Farmer
Sunday, after 10 a.m.
Mass at Island Grove
Tuesday, after 8 a.m.
Mass at Bishop Creek
Thursday, after 8 a.m.
Mass at Island Grove
Saturday, 4:45 p.m. at Bishop Creek

EDWARDSVILLE

St. Boniface
Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Thursday, 6-6:30 p.m. (bilingual)
Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.

St. Mary

Saturday, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

EFFINGHAM

Sacred Heart
Monday-Thursday, 8-8:25 a.m.
First Monday of the month,
7 p.m. during adoration
Saturday, 3 p.m.

St. Anthony of Padua

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday,
Friday, 7:45-8:15 a.m.
Saturday, 3:15-4 p.m.

FIELDON

St. Mary
Saturday, 5:15-5:50 p.m.

GLEN CARBON

St. Cecilia
Monday, 6-6:30 p.m.
Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.
First Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.

GODFREY

St. Ambrose
Saturday, 3:30-4 p.m.

GREEN COUNTY

All Saints (White Hall)
Sunday, 9:15-9:25 a.m.

St. John the Evangelist (Carrollton)

Saturday, 5:15-5:45 p.m.

St. Michael (Greenfield)

Saturday, 3:15-3:45 p.m.

GREENVILLE

St. Lawrence
Saturday, 4:45-5:15 p.m.

GRANITE CITY

Holy Family
Saturday, 3-3:30 p.m.

St. Elizabeth

Saturday, 3-4 p.m.

GRANTFORK

St. Gertrude
Tuesday, 8:30-9 a.m.

HIGHLAND

St. Paul
Saturday, 3 p.m.

JACKSONVILLE

Our Saviour
Saturday, 3:15 p.m.

JERSEYVILLE

Holy Ghost
Sunday, 7:15-7:50 a.m.
Saturday, 3-3:50 p.m.

St. Francis Xavier

Saturday, 3:15-3:45 p.m.

LIBERTY

St. Brigid
Saturday, 3:50-4:20 p.m.

LITCHFIELD

Holy Family
Saturday, 3:15-3:45 p.m.

MATTOON

Immaculate Conception
Sunday, 7:30 a.m.; 4:30 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday,

CONFESSION

Friday, 6:30 a.m.
Tuesday, Thursday, 5 p.m.
Saturday, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

MARINE
St. Elizabeth
Sunday, 9:15 a.m.

MARSHALL
St. Mary
Wednesday, 6 p.m.

MARYVILLE
Mother of Perpetual Help
Tuesday, 5-5:45 p.m.
Saturday, 3-3:45 p.m.

MENDON
St. Edward
Saturday, 7:15-7:45 p.m.

MONTROSE
St. Rose of Lima
Saturday, 4:30-5 p.m.

MT. STERLING
Holy Family
Saturday, 4-5 p.m.

MT. ZION
Our Lady of the Holy Spirit
Sunday, 10-10:20 a.m.; 5-5:20 p.m.
Monday, Thursday,
Friday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.
Wednesday, 4:15-5:15 p.m.
Saturday, 4-5 p.m.

NEWTON
St. Thomas the Apostle
Wednesday, 4:15-4:30 p.m.
Saturday, 8-9 a.m., 3:30-4 p.m.

NOKOMIS
St. Louis
Saturday, 3-3:30 p.m.

NORTH ARM
St. Aloysius
Sunday, by appointment

PANA
St. Patrick
Saturday, 2:45-3:25 p.m.

PARIS
St. Mary
Saturday, 4-5 p.m.

PETERSBURG
St. Peter
Saturday, 3-3:45 p.m.

PIERRON
Immaculate Conception
Thursday, 5:30-7 p.m.

PITTSFIELD
St. Mary
Friday, First Friday after 8 a.m. Mass
Saturday, after 6 p.m. Mass

POCAHONTAS
St. Nicholas
Saturday, 3:45-4:15 p.m.

QUINCY
Blessed Sacrament
Sunday, 4-4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, 4:30-5:10 p.m.
Saturday, 9-9:30 a.m.

St. Joseph
First Saturdays, 9-9:20 a.m.

St. Francis Solanus
Saturday, 8:30 a.m.; 3-4 p.m.

St. Peter
Saturday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.;
3:30-4:30 p.m.

St. Rose of Lima
Sunday, 7:30 and 10:30 a.m.
Monday, 11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, 6:30 a.m.
Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.
Thursday, 6:30 p.m.
Friday, 11:30 a.m.
Saturday, 7:30 a.m.

RAMSEY
St. Joseph
Sunday, 7-7:45 a.m.

RIVERTON
St. James
Saturday, 3 p.m.

ROBINSON
St. Elizabeth
Saturday, 3:45 p.m.

ROCHESTER
St. Jude
Tuesday-Friday, 6:45-7:15 a.m.
Saturday, 3:15-4 p.m.

SHELBYVILLE
Immaculate Conception
Saturday, 45 minutes prior to Mass

SHERMAN
St. John Vianney
Wednesday, 5-5:30 p.m.
Saturday, 4-4:45 p.m.

SHUMWAY
Annunciation
Wednesday, 7:45-8:15 a.m.
Saturday, 4:15-5 p.m.

SIGEL
St. Michael the Archangel
Saturday, 3:15 p.m.

STAUNTON
St. Michael the Archangel
Sunday, 7:30-7:55 a.m.
Saturday, 3:30-3:55 p.m.

SULLIVAN
St. Columcille
Wednesday, 5-6 p.m.

TAYLORVILLE
St. Mary
Saturday, 11:30 a.m.-noon

TUSCOLA
Forty Martyrs
Saturday, 5 p.m.

VANDALIA
Mother of Dolors
Saturday, 3-3:45 p.m.

VRIDEN
Sacred Heart
Sunday, 9:45-10:10 a.m.

VIRGINA
St. Luke
Tuesday, 6-7 p.m.

WINCHESTER
St. Mark
Sunday, after 10:30 a.m. Mass

WOOD RIVER
Holy Angels
Saturday, 3-4 p.m.

Confession in Spanish
St. Alexius, Beardstown:
Thursday, 6-7 p.m. or by
appointment: wstock@dio.org
Our Lady of Lourdes, Decatur:
Tuesday, 12-1 p.m., Thursday, 5-6
p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m.-12 p.m., or by
appointment: mtrumner@dio.org

St. Thomas the Apostle, Decatur:
Saturday, 3-3:45 p.m. or by
appointment: mtrumner@dio.org

Sacred Heart, Springfield:
Last Thursday of the month, 6 p.m.
or by appointment: (217) 523-4501

St. Boniface, Edwardsville:
Thursday, 1 p.m. or by
appointment: (618) 656-6450

Sacred Heart, Effingham:
By appointment: (217) 347-7177

St. Mary, Alton: By appoint-
ment: frpaul@stmarysalton.com / (618) 465-4284, ext. 227

Immaculate Conception, Mattoon:
30 minutes before daily Masses,
3-4 p.m. on Saturday, or by
appointment: 217-235-0539.

Forty Martyrs, Tuscola:
By appointment: (217) 253-4412

St. John the Baptist, Arcola:
Thursday, 6:45 p.m.

St. Luke, Virginia: Tuesday, 6-7 p.m.
or by appointment: wstock@dio.org

Other languages
Philippines (Tagalog and
Cebuano): by appointment: (715)
207-9575 (textable); or email
Father Nick at frnick.husain@hshs.org or ngrblnn@yahoo.com

Indian (Kannada, Telugu, and
Tamil): by appointment: email
Father Chowrappa:
frcaraj@gmail.com

Vietnamese: by appointment: (217)
961-6404, ask for Father Dat Hoang

Italian and Igbo (language
in Nigeria): By appointment:
Father Freddy, (217) 220-1837

Polish: By appointment: Father
Michal Rosa, (217) 347-7177 or
By appointment:
Father Augustyniak,
paugustyniak@dio.org,
(217) 774-3434

American Sign Language: Our
Saviour Parish, Jacksonville: By
appointment: azawadzki@dio.org

End note:
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