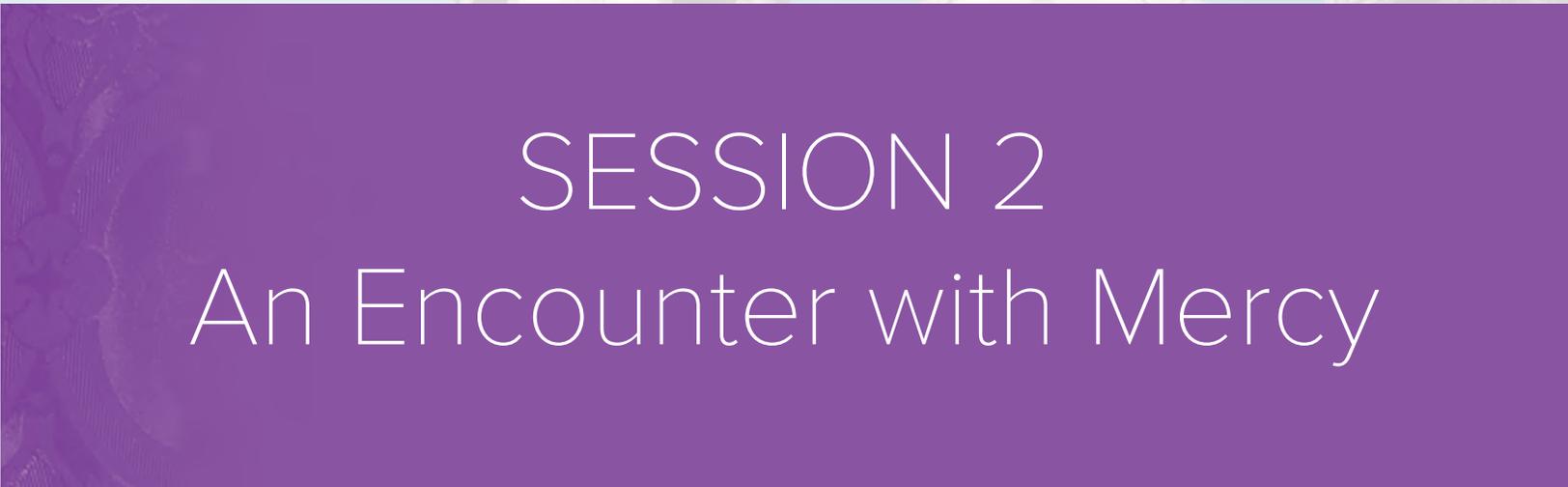




FORGIVENTM

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION



SESSION 2

An Encounter with Mercy



Study Guide

FORGIVEN™

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION

Nihil Obstat: Currently Under Review

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SESSION 2 | AN ENCOUNTER WITH MERCY

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
You show us the glory of the Father,
the God of mercy and forgiveness,
the God who is love.
Help us to trust fully in your divine mercy
and rely completely on your unending love.
Teach us to be merciful,
as the Father is merciful,
that the whole world may know
and trust in your merciful love.
We ask this through the intercession of
Mary, Mother of Mercy.

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

God loves us right where we are, but he loves us too much to leave us there. In the last session we looked at guilt as a wakeup call—a way to turn our attention back to God when we have sinned. In this session we will look more closely at God’s invitation to encounter his mercy and healing in a very real and tangible way in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



“Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

—2 Corinthians 5:17–21

CONNECT

Can you describe a time when you were very aware of the presence of God with you?

Who is someone that has helped you most in life?

“In her motherly care, the Church grants us the mercy of God which prevails over all our sins and is especially at work in the sacrament of reconciliation.”

—CCC 2040



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VIDEO

Watch the teaching on video.

The following is a brief outline of topics covered.

I. Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8)

- A. What was she feeling?
- B. Unexpected encounter with God's love and mercy
 - 1. Jesus did not condemn her
 - 2. He also did not condone her sins
- C. God sees us as we are and loves us
- D. Confession offers a new beginning
 - 1. We are not our sins
 - 2. Mercy invites us to a much greater life

II. God's Mercy

- A. God is merciful
- B. God is constantly seeking us out
- C. We encounter Jesus himself in the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- D. Jesus gave the Apostles his own authority and power to forgive sins
 - 1. God has always used mediators
 - 2. The priest acts in the Person of Christ the Head

III. Human Aspect of the Sacrament

- A. God knows we need a tangible experience of mercy and forgiveness
- B. Confession gives us a physical encounter along with the supernatural reality of grace
- C. We have a human need to say that we're sorry
- D. We have a human need to actually hear someone say that we are forgiven

IV. Healing

- A. In Confession Jesus forgives our sins
- B. He also wants to address the root causes of our sin and heal the wounds of sin in our soul
- C. The Sacrament gives us the grace to “go and sin no more”
- D. God offers us his mercy so that we can extend his mercy to the world



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DISCUSS

1. According to psychologists, an identity crisis occurs when someone is unsure of their role in life and feel as if they don't really know themselves. In other words, someone experiencing an "identity crisis" is unable to provide an answer to the question "Who are you?" What difference do you think Jesus makes to the formation of a strong identity?

2. Holiness and sin have an inverse relationship. As one increases, the other decreases. That being said, it was common for many of the saints to go to Confession frequently. For example, Pope St. John Paul II and St. Teresa of Calcutta are known to have gone to Confession once a week. How do we explain this apparent contradiction?

3. In Confession, why does the priest say "I absolve you of your sin" and not "God absolves you of your sin"?



COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S MERCY

The story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2–11 presents us with a beautiful image of the mercy and grace offered to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Read through this passage slowly and prayerfully:

“Early in the morning [Jesus] came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?’ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.’”

—John 8:2–11

Imagine yourself in this passage. **Have you ever felt like this woman: caught in your sins, accused by others, condemning yourself for mistakes you’ve made? What might she have been thinking and feeling when the scribes and Pharisees brought her before Jesus to make their point? How do you think she felt when everyone else left and she was left alone with Jesus? What may have gone through her mind when she heard his words, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again”?** Write your reflections in the space below.



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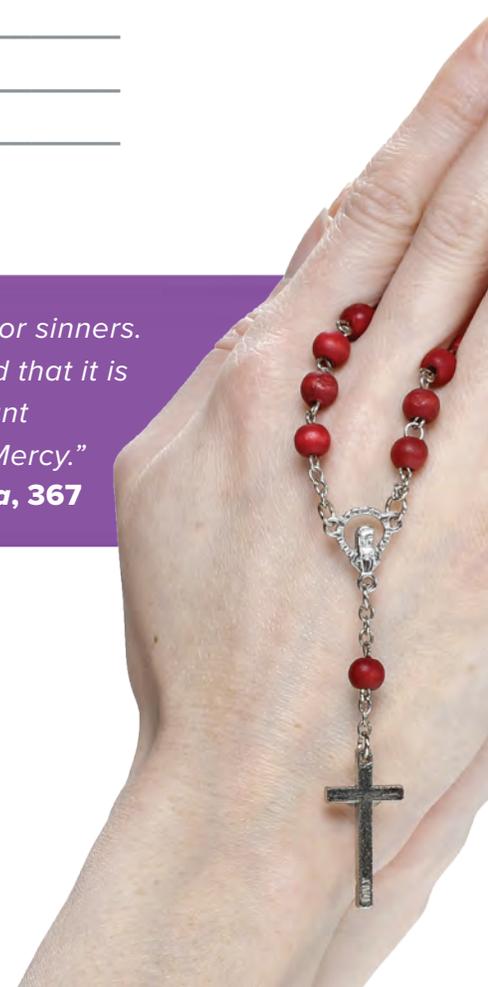
COMMIT - CONTINUED

Jesus rescues this woman in two ways. He forgives rather than condemns her, but he also silences her accusers. The forgiveness we receive in Confession reconciles us with God, but it also means there is no longer anything for the accuser, Satan, to hold over us. And it also means that we no longer need to accuse ourselves for our sins. They are washed away, and we are free. In place of our guilt God gives us his healing grace. Mercy makes us free to love.

God offers us his mercy so that we, in turn, can offer his mercy to a world desperately in need. **Take a few moments to prayerfully reflect on the ways God has shown you his mercy. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one person to whom you can extend God's mercy.** This may be someone who has wronged you, someone who needs to hear the message of God's mercy, someone in need of a kind, encouraging word, etc. **What concrete thing can you do to share God's mercy with this person?**

“My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as King of Mercy.”

—Diary of St. Faustina, 367



CLOSING PRAYER

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with mercy and compassion,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in mercy.

For as high as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his mercy toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Amen.

—Psalm 103:1–5, 8, 11–12, 22

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1440–1445

John 8:1–11

Michael E. Gaitley MIC, *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told: Now Is the Time of Mercy* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2015)

Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy* (New York: Random House, 2016)

Pope St. John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980)

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press: 2005)

Lighthouse Talks:

Scott Hahn, *The Healing Power of Confession*

Father Larry Richards, *Confession*

