



FORGIVEN™

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION

SESSION 5

Answering Common
Questions about Confession

FORGIVEN

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CONFESSION

Nihil Obstat: Currently Under Review

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SESSION 5 | ANSWERING COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT CONFESSION

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God,
I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins
And after life here to gain eternal happiness
Because you have promised it
Who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful.
In this hope I intend to live and die.

Amen.

—Act of Hope

INTRODUCTION

In 1 John 4:8 we read that **“God is love.”** This is the beginning of the answer to every possible question about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Over the course of this study we have looked at God’s love and mercy, how he seeks us out and calls us back to himself when we sin, how to prepare for and participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and where we find its basis in Scripture. It all begins in God’s love for us and his desire to forgive and heal us in this sacrament. Why do we need to go to a priest? Why is the sacrament designed the way that it is? The first part of the answer is: because God is love.

CONNECT

Have you identified a particular calling or purpose for your life?

What appeals to you most about spending eternity in Heaven?

“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. Louis de Montfort

VIDEO

Watch the video. The following is a brief outline of the topics covered.

I. Sacrament of Mercy

- A.** We need this sacrament when our lives start to sink
- B.** Jesus reaches out to save us like he reached out to St. Peter

II. Theological Foundation for the Sacrament

- A.** God is love (1 John 4:8)
 - 1.** God’s very nature is love—he is a community of Persons in the Trinity
 - 2.** When we turn away from God’s love, he seeks us out
- B.** God’s revelation of himself in Exodus 34:6 is mercy and steadfast love
- C.** *Hesed*, Hebrew for “committed love” or “sustained love”



VIDEO CONTINUED

- D. Jesus is constantly going out in his public ministry to seek others
- E. John 20:19–23
 - 1. Jesus sends his Apostles out with authority to forgive sins
 - 2. They continue the ministry of reconciliation started by Jesus
 - 3. John 20:23—“**If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven.**”
- F. Second Corinthians 5:18–20—Paul and the other Apostles share in this ministry
 - 1. This authority is passed on from the Apostles to their successors
 - 2. The priest behind the priest: Jesus
 - 3. The priest acts in the Person of Christ the Head

III. Why Can't I Just Go to God Directly?

- A. We're all called to go straight to God every day
- B. Confession is the most direct way to go to God for his forgiveness
- C. God has always worked through mediators (Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the Apostles)

IV. Why Does It Make Sense That God Set up Confession This Way?

- A. It is very healthy to acknowledge mistakes and receive forgiveness
- B. God knows what we need

V. What Are the Effects of the Sacrament?

- A. We are reconciled with God (CCC 1468)
- B. We are reconciled with God's family, the Church (CCC 1469)
- C. We encounter the healing power of God's mercy

VI. Rite of Penance

- A. First step is to prepare ahead of time with an examination of conscience
- B. Confess our sins and sincerely try to remember all of them
- C. Penance is an expression of love after receiving the free gift of forgiveness
- D. Words of absolution—Jesus is present, and he is the one forgiving us of our sins

VII. Woman Caught in Adultery as an Image of Confession

- A. Jesus did not condemn her in her sin
- B. He loved her too much to leave her in her sin: “Go and sin no more.”

“Forgiveness of sins brings reconciliation with God, but also with the Church.”

—CCC 1462

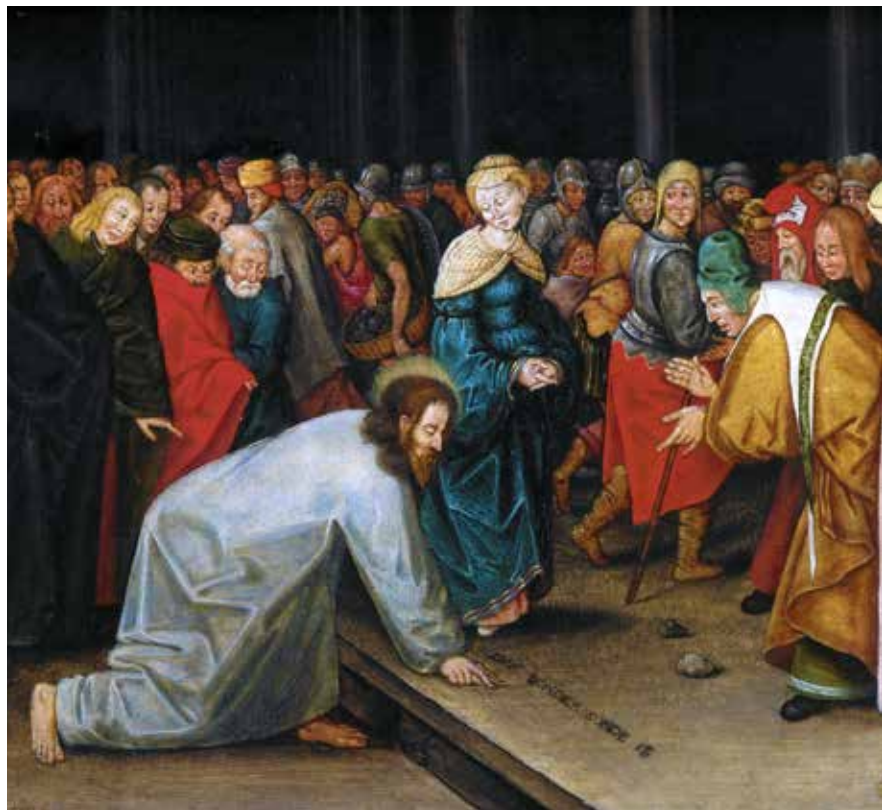


DISCUSS

1. Matt had been away from Confession for seven years. He had been living far from God and came to a breaking point. Not knowing where to turn, he went to the parish and got in line for Confession. He writes about his experience: "When I heard the words of absolution from the priest, it was as if heavy chains fell away from my body. I experienced a sense of freedom and joy that I had never known. That was nearly twenty years ago, and today, I am still that changed man! How does Matt's story emphasize our psychological need and spiritual need of the sacrament?"

2. In *The Fate of Empires and the Search for Survival*, historian Sir John Bagot Glubb (1897-1987) chronicles the decline and collapse of great empires and identifies a similar cycle in all. In the beginning, collective self-sacrifice and discipline builds the empire. Prosperity follows and leads to greater comfort, less religious practice, and moral decline. Finally, moral decline leads to selfishness, decadent living, and eventual collapse. How does this cycle demonstrate the corporate nature of sin and the need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

3. Jesus says to the woman caught in adultery: **"Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again"** [John 8:11]. His words demonstrate that God loves us just as we are but too much to leave us there! Why is it not enough to say that "God loves you just as you are?"



COMMIT—ENCOUNTERING GOD’S MERCY

The story of the prodigal son is perhaps one the most familiar of the many parables that Jesus tells. This narrative of sin, repentance, and forgiveness is a wonderful illustration of how we can encounter God in Confession. Read through this passage slowly and prayerfully:

“There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.”

—Luke 15:11–24

Consider the younger son at the beginning of this parable. When he asks for his share of the inheritance, he is basically telling his father, “I prefer what you have to who you are—I want your stuff, but I don’t want you anymore.” **How do you think this made the father feel?**

COMMIT - CONTINUED

When the son had squandered his inheritance, he quickly realized how empty his chosen lifestyle was. He wanted to go home, but he felt like his poor choices were in the way of returning to the way things were. **How is this like (or unlike) our experience of sin?**

The father must have been watching for his son because he saw him “while he was yet at a distance.” This loving and compassionate father couldn’t wait for his son to make it all the way home, so he ran to meet him. And he was so eager to forgive him and welcome him home that he didn’t even let his son finish the apology he had planned out. It was enough that his son desired to come home. **How do you think the son felt when his father welcomed him in this way? Have you had a similar experience in your life that you would be willing to share with us?**

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our Lord watches for us and runs to meet us. It is enough that we desire to come home. When we come to the sacrament with sorrow for our sins, God welcomes us home and wraps us in his grace. We were dead, and now we are alive again. We were lost, and now we are found.

Make an appointment with God to encounter his loving mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Find a time when you can go to Confession. Write it down. And begin preparing now and praying for the grace of a good confession.



“Forgiveness of sins brings reconciliation with God, but also with the Church.”

—CCC 1462

CLOSING PRAYER

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust, let me not be put to shame;
let not my enemies exult over me.

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.
Be mindful of your compassion, O LORD, and of your merciful love,
for they have been from of old.
Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions;
according to your mercy remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!
Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.
For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.

Turn to me and be gracious to me; for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distresses.
Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Amen.

—Psalm 25:1–2, 4–11, 16–18

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1420–1498

