
CONFESSION: THE SACRAMENT OF FREEDOM

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WEEK 1 ~ Introduction: ‘Where Are You?’

I. “Where Are You?”

- After Adam and Eve ate of the apple, they hid in the bushes. God approached and called out, “Where Are You?”
- At the very beginning of humankind, we discover the Sacrament of Confession. Man sins against God and hides, and God comes to man and invites him to come out of hiding. This is the essence of Confession, which is at the heart of what it means to be human, and our relationship with God.
- Questions: *Why should I go to confession? Why do I need to confess to a priest? What does the bible and historical Church say? How do I make a good confession and how do I make confession a way of life?*

II. Confession Sounds Awkward

- Confession can be a very hard thing.
 - Imagine a Texan Longhorn, at the heart of a game, soaring after a ball in the air...he dives...and he fumbles it. The last thing he’d want to do after the game is rush to the cameras and news reporters and say, “listen up, I’ve fumbled!” When we make a mistake or look stupid, we want to hide it.
 - We spend our days trying to please people. Confession is the opposite. It’s where you take your worst mistakes, your deepest flaws, your insecurities, the ugly parts of you...and not just anywhere, but to a priest – the person who we most want to look good to!
 - It’s a little crazy...so why go?

III. Not Natural, But Necessary

- “It’s only *natural* for us to wince at the very thought of kneeling before God’s representatives on earth, his priests, and of speaking our sins aloud...Self-accusation has never been humanity’s favorite pastime. Yet it’s essential to every confession.”
~ S. Haun
- Confession isn’t natural, but there’s also nothing natural about heaven. In order to get there we have to step above the natural, to “put aside the old man” and “clothe ourselves with the new man” (Colossians 3:9-10).

IV. We Forget that God is a Person TOO

- When it comes to our sins we like to think of God as some distant, aloof spirit entity – somewhere upstairs, perhaps. But God is more of a person than any person that

you've ever known. When we see Him, we will treat Him exactly as we've learned to treat the people around us down here. If we've spent our entire lives just putting up pretty masks and always hiding our true selves – then we will do the same thing to God when we meet Him – in fact, we are right here and right now.

- *In a nutshell: confession is our chance on earth to learn how to be real with God.*
- But if you never put raw dough in an oven it will never bake into a cookie. If we don't bring ourselves again and again to the confessional, our bare, raw souls will never have a chance to 'cook,' that is, to be received by God Himself and Transformed.
- **The art of learning to confess is the art of learning to bring yourself to God and say, "Here I am God, take me and change me."**
- What is a sacrament?
 - A sacrament is when you give something earthly to God, and allow God to sanctify it.
 - The Eucharist: when we bring bread and wine to God and He turns it into His Body and Blood.
 - Confession: when we bring ourselves – the real man or the real woman – to God, and allow Him to Change *us*.

V. The Sacrament of Freedom

- Our thoughts about confession are often wrong and deceiving. We think about confession: "Oh great, now I have to go to confession..." Or in terms of "back to the judge...more penances...busted!" But this is all wrong

VI. Confession is the Greatest Example on Earth of *Freedom*

- Confession is the one place where:
 - You are free to stand, just as you are, before God, and say, "Here I am"
 - You can learn to stop hiding
 - You can open up the doors of your heart and say to God, "Please, I am yours, come inside."
- Confession is radical intimacy
 - Question: what do people most desire in life??? --- Intimacy
- The best analogy of confession is the relationship between a man and a woman. What is it that makes marriage so wonderful – essentially, it's intimacy – the intimacy that comes from getting to know each other more and more, seeing the good and bad, and learning to love despite the person's shortcomings or blemishes. This ongoing process is what builds intimacy. Little by little you open up yourself to someone, trust yourself to them, and when they love you despite it all, then intimacy occurs.
- Question: Have you ever revealed a secret to someone, a secret that you were ashamed of, and you were so worried they might despise you for it? But when they didn't despise you, but loved you even more, you became overwhelmed with a sense of love and intimacy. – This is Confession

A life of confession is a life of exposing yourself more and more to God and discovering that He loves you despite your flaws and with your flaws. Every time this happens, your heart warms up a little more and falls in love with God.

VII. Sounds good...but maybe tomorrow...

- Okay, so now your thinking, “Hmmm...He’s making it sound pretty good... but when it comes down to it, talking to *that guy* about my darkest secrets and deepest blemishes...eh...may be not.
- My intent in these talks is not to just tell you to go to confession nor to hype up confession as something fuzzy and bubbly.
 - Confession is hard. It’s painful. And sometimes truly awkward and scary. It is not enough to go once or twice – confession is a way of life. Confession is death to self...but that’s also the only path to life.
- But confession is liberating...
 - And when we learn to make confession a way of life, we can experience here a deeper and deeper peace, deeper enlightenment, deeper self-discovery and freedom.
- Our goal in the class:
 - To learn *why* you should go to confession
 - To begin to *desire* to make confession a way of life
 - To learn *how* to do it.

VIII. Review of Classes ahead

I. Introduction: Where Are You?

II. What does the Church Say About Confession?

III. Getting Real: Taking Sin Seriously

IV. Why Do I Need a Priest?

V. What Keeps Me From Going to Confession?

VI. How Do I Make a Good Confession?

VII. Watchfulness: The Real Journey

VIII. A New Life: Discovering Freedom, Joy and Transformation

IX. What Makes Life Meaningful After All?

- Nowadays, we often think about Jesus as some guy going around saying, “I’m okay, you’re okay.” But if that’s all there is to it, then why did Jesus Christ have to shed His blood on the cross? Something in us isn’t okay and needs healing. Jesus preached love and mercy in everything He did and said, but He also had a lot to say about repenting. (Mat. 4:17, Mat. 3:8, Luke 4:31-32)
- Church Fathers:
 - Romans 2:4
 - “This life is in truth wholly devoted to repentance, *penthos* and wailing. This is why it is necessary to repent, not merely for one or two days, but throughout one’s whole life.” ~ St. John Chrysostom.
 - “This *life* has been given to you for *repentance*; do not waste it in vain pursuits.” ~ St. Isaac the Syrian
- Life comes down to ONE thing: Repentance
- But what is repentance?

- Unfortunately, we often have a totally wrong idea about repentance. Repentance isn't about going around sad or guilty all the time. Repentance is the life of tuning one's heart to the station of God – the life of lifting up one's heart to the Light of Jesus Christ.
- Repentance is not remorse; Repentance is a new life. *Metanoia* (Greek) – changing the direction of one's mind (it is a matter of *being*).
- Repentance is the opening up of your soul to the Beauty of God.
- What does Confession have to do with Repentance?
 - Definition: the English word makes you think: 'To confess... 'I done it.'"
 - But the Greek word has a different meaning:
 - **ἐξομολογοῦμαι** – to share the essence of oneself
 - "When we say "confess" we imply that we accept, recognize or witness an event or fact. But this is not the original meaning. The point is not of admitting, more or less reluctantly, a hitherto "unrecognized" sin, but an acceptance of and submission to the divine Logos (*exomologesis*) beyond and above the nature and condition of man." (GOARCH)
- **Repentance is *Never* Individualistic**
 - Repentance is the death to *selfishness* and the beginning of *otherness* – this otherness can only happen by opening yourself to some *other person* – to *open up the door of yourself to another* – to reveal the person you are to another person.
 - Repentance is never individualistic because individualism is the definition of sin. Sin means: Me not You&Me. Sin is saying to your brother or sister, 'Me first.' Sin is saying to God, "I don't want to share my life with you or with the people you put in my life.
 - Therefore, HEALING MUST BE COMMUNAL
 - a. The only way to start healing is to stop being me-focused and to become we-focused.
 - **The Sacrament of Confession changes us from ME-PEOPLE into WE-PEOPLE..and this is repentance**

X. The Sacrament of Freedom

- What is confession?
 - Confession is our chance on earth to learn how to be real with God. Confession is Radical Intimacy with God. Confession is the door that opens up the soul to God's grace and love.
- Why should we go to confession?
 - The more confession becomes a part of life, the greater chance we have here and now to find deeper peace, deeper enlightenment, deeper self-discovery and freedom. *So now, we just need to learn how to do it...*