

In a

Word™

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WHY GO TO CONFESSION?

Photo by Father Andreas Kedati, SVD

WHY GO TO CONFESSION?

Today's world views the sacrament of Penance as irrelevant.

"No need for confession or reconciliation" people will say. Its almost as if we have absolved ourselves of sin.

Has sin gone away? Don't people sin anymore? The answer of course is yes. Yet, we live in a world that wants confession abolished .

Maybe we today are afraid of confession. Perhaps our modern society has forgotten the advice of the wise Confucius. He once said: "If the archer misses the target, he cannot blame anyone but himself."

This is a maxim we need to apply to the sacrament of penance. For our society has conveniently yet dangerously adopted the attitude in life that we do very little personal wrong. Blame the other person...not ourselves. Why are we so afraid of blaming ourselves? Are we perfect?

No, confession is still needed so it may be prudent to consider the value of the sacrament of Penance as we finish this season of Lent. Let's answer some of the common questions concerning the sacrament.

Why go to confession?

The answer is simple. MEN AND WOMEN SIN. Remember the ingredients of sin....the act we commit is wrong, we know it is wrong, and yet we do it anyway. That is sin. Everyone of us since the time of Adam and Eve are guilty of this. The sin of Adam and Eve commonly called original sin is something every human being has inherited. In its starkest terms "original sin means that sooner or later we as human beings will sin."

That is why we have confession...to admit our faults to our God and ourselves.



Can't I just tell God I am sorry?

Sure you could. But that doesn't take care of the problem! Sin always involves more than myself. When I sin I affect other people. In truly seeking forgiveness we must by necessity tell them as well.

How can I tell other people I am sorry..... I don't know who they are!

That is precisely why we have confession. The priest represents not only Christ but the community. In his formal act of granting penance and absolution the priest representing the community is letting us know that Christ and the community forgives.

There is healing in knowing that. I cannot possibly know all the people who I have caused harm because of my sin. I

can't tell them all so I symbolically do that thru the priest.

How is it possible that my sin affects so many people.

Use the example of anger. I get angry in the morning at my children, my wife or husband. I may even carry this anger to others. They in turn are wounded and carry that hurt as the day goes on. Because of their hurt others will be affected because of their actions the rest of the day. In short, sin mushrooms and expands. There is no such thing as sin that is personal between me and God alone. Sin affects other people!

But why tell a priest? He's human like me, isn't he?

Sure the priest is human and that is the point. He represents the community. But we miss an even more important part of the sacrament of reconciliation. By "speaking" and stating our sins we are healing ourselves. When we adopt a posture of repentance and kneeling down to say that "I have done wrong" something happens to us. We are changed and we are healed. Speaking out loud the wrong is more beneficial than one can ever imagine.

But I always say the same sins over and over.. what good is there in that?

Again there is always goodness in admitting that I am guilty. By admitting in confession we have done wrong we admit the need we have for Christ to guide our life. Yes, the sins may be the same but by admitting to them and trying

to work things out what is important. God wants people who try! Look at Simon Peter...he made numerous mistakes. He even denied Christ...but he tried and for that Christ love him. It is the same with us. Our sins might be the same, we commit the same ones over and over but by

admitting to them we acknowledge our humanness and frailty and the need we have for God. Finally, if we consistently repeat the same we need the sacrament to reflect on our behavior and the reason why we commit the same sin. Are we really sorry for the sin? Or are we just going through the motions and so blocking the blessings of confession?



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Penance services are wonderful opportunities to see the fullness of confession. With others around us we reflect on our sins, faults, and failings. Then we privately approach a priest and admit these sins and are given absolution



Who should go?

All Catholics who have attained the age of reason must confess their sins at least once a year.

When can I go?

Every Church has designated times for confession. However, you can always make an appointment to see the priest and arrange for confession. Confession can take place at any time and actually any place.

Is confession really private?

Yes it is. The priest must maintain his vow of confidentiality and silence. This is a sacred trust. Do not be alarmed if you think the priest recognizes your voice or sees you because you face the priest. Most priests are like other human beings who admire people who can admit to their faults and are trying to do better with their lives.

How do I go to confession?



You can go face to face to a priest or kneel behind a screen or cloth. You make the sign of the cross and mention the last time you may have gone to confession. Then you describe your sins. The priest may then discuss things with you or you may ask the priest any questions you wish. When that is complete you make an act of contrition and are then absolved of your sins.

This is Lent....a time to get ourselves closer to God. The best way to examine our lives is to use the wonderful sacrament of reconciliation which our Catholic Church has provided.

Sin exists and yes we do sin. Remember that all of us do wrong. We cannot blame others. At some point we must accept our humanness and frailty and speak to God our faults. The Sacrament of Penance gives us a great opportunity for self evaluation and improvement. The sense of peace and wholeness is one of the great benefits of making a good confession.



in a word or two

BALTIMORE, MD -- The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) is pleased to announce the election of the Most Reverend Roy E. Campbell, Jr. as its next President. Bishop Campbell was elected by the Black Bishops of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). He succeeds the Most Reverend John Ricard who will remain active in the NBCC as its Immediate Past President. The change in leadership will become effective on April 1, 2019.

Although the first five gatherings of Black Catholics were convened from 1889 to 1894, these events inspired the creation of the NBCC in 1985 and rekindled the commitment to gather Black Catholics once more, with Congresses occurring every five years since that time. Under the direction of Bishop Ricard, who has long provided leadership, administrative and financial oversight, the NBCC has grown in its ability to assist Black Catholics and Black Catholic Organizations in their mission to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Campbell, born in Charles County, MD in 1947 and raised in Washington, DC, was ordained a Catholic priest in 2007 for the Archdiocese of Washington. He was appointed an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington by Pope Francis and ordained a bishop in 2017. He is currently a member of the USCCB Subcommittee on African American Catholics.

Bishop Ricard, the retired Bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee and currently the Rector of the Josephite Seminary in Washington, DC, will work closely with Bishop Campbell in his new role. Bishop Ricard continues to bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to assist the Congress in its mission.

We greatly appreciate the many years of dedicated service Bishop Ricard has given to our community, and we ask you to please join us as we welcome Bishop Roy Campbell, Jr. as the new President of the National Black Catholic Congress.

Sister Pat Haley, SCN passed away November 27, 2018. Sister Pat was a professed Sister of Charity for 52 years. Sister Pat first met the SCNs when she attended Holy Family High School in Ensley, AL. As a high school senior in May 1963, she became involved in the Civil Rights movement and was arrested and jailed for participating in the Birmingham youth marches.

In September 1963, she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth as the congregation's first African American postulant. Sister Pat was also the first African American Sister to serve in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

She spent eighteen years ministering in Philadelphia, served as coordinator of the Spiritual Enrichment Program for the Institute of Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, and continued her ministry in St. Petersburg, Florida, before returning to Kentucky in 2011. Throughout her 52 years as a Sister of Charity of Nazareth, she attended especially to the African American community, serving with her gift of spirit, her dynamism and her gift of song.



Sister Jamie Phelps (left) and Sister Pat Haley at 2004 Black Sisters Conference in Houston, Texas. Sister Haley was one of the founding members of the Black Sisters Conference and first board member. (photo by Cathy Green Miner)

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Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Arkansas.

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