



Sacraments 29/36: Why Do I Have to Go to Confession?

Why do I have to go to confession to a priest? Why can't I just say my sins to God in private? Many people will say that this is the top reason for not going to confession. At the heart of it is the shame and embarrassment of saying our sins out loud.

So why say it out loud to a priest? To understand this, we need to look at the nature of the Sacraments as a whole. Rooted in the Incarnation of Jesus, our path to holiness, along with the Sacraments, includes both flesh and spirit, the human and the divine, the natural and the supernatural. God knows that we do not do well with pure spirit. To understand things, the Spirit needs to speak through our understanding, our natural senses. The supernatural is then communicated to us through the natural.

In Baptism, the natural meaning of the washing with water is to be made clean. This natural meaning is made supernatural through the intention and words of Baptism. We are washed clean of sin.

In the Eucharist, the natural meaning of a meal is to join in community and receive nutrients. This natural meaning is made supernatural through the intention and words of the Mass. We are made community in the Body of Christ and we receive the nutrients of Jesus. We are what we eat, so through the Eucharist, we become Jesus for others.

In Confession, the natural meaning is to say we are sorry and hear that we are forgiven. This natural meaning is made supernatural through the intention and words of the confessional. We need to admit to our sins out loud to another human. This makes it real and takes away any of our rationalizations. We need to hear that we are forgiven.

Add to this our understanding of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Through this Sacrament, a man is configured to Christ as a priest. Therefore, when confessing to a priest, you are confessing to God. And through the priest, God gives you forgiveness.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Catechism Summary of the Sacrament of Reconciliation