



# CONFESSION AND THE YOUTH

Written by: Natham Kamel  
St John Church, Covina, CA

## BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES:

The Sacrament of Confession has many blessings and is of great importance in building our spiritual life. Our Church has been practicing this Sacrament faithfully since the Apostolic Age. All those who practice confession faithfully and correctly, will experience its practical benefits spiritually and physically.

One of the many advantages to confession from the spiritual point of view is when we confess; we receive through the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of forgiveness of sins. There is no other way to receive forgiveness not even by how much money you have.

Another advantage through Confession is that we are made worthy of receiving Communion. *"The one who eats My Body and drink My Blood dwells in Me and I in him"* (John 6:56). Without confession, we are not worthy of this gift, as St. Paul said. (1 Corinthians 11:28)

In confessing, we examine and purify our soul, in other words improve our spiritual life with careful self-examination.

When you reveal all your thoughts to the priest, this helps in eliminating the bad thoughts. There is nothing the devil would like better than for us not to reveal our bad thoughts to the priest.

Through confession, we find solutions to our problems. It helps us to see what we did wrong and how to prevent it.

Another great spiritual benefit is discipleship. Christian life is based on discipleship. The last commandment of

our Lord Jesus Christ was: *"Go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."* (Matthew 28:19-20) Therefore, spiritual aspects of soul salvation and its growth till perfection need a spiritual father to guide, teach and train.

Now that we have talked about the spiritual point of view, we will talk about the psychological point of view. Human nature has a need for expressing its shortcomings and it finds rest in confessing its fault. The conscience pushes us to confess our sins and we obtain relaxation and comfort

only when we do so. Confession helps us in ridding ourselves of psychological worries. Through confession, the soul becomes clear, our world is full of problems and confession helps us in dealing with them.

From the physical point of view, confession is very important. Confession has many blessings for our body, for we know from the Holy Bible that the cause of some diseases was sin, as in the case of the sick man of Bethesda. (John 5:14) Therefore, our church teaches that the sick person, to whom the priest will perform the Sacrament of Unction, has to confess his sins first before he is cured of his disease.

Therefore, confession cures the body as well as the spirit, frees those who are overcome with bad habits, it frees the individual from the consequences of sin.

## OBSTACLES:

Now we know the benefits to confession and how it is good for us, it is now time to talk about some of the obstacles that will hold us back or prevent us from going.



*The Prodigal Son*



**The greatest obstacle to confession is that we must confess to a priest,** the first thing we must remember is that we do not confess to the priest; we confess to the Lord Jesus Christ. The priest is simply a witness; **the priest gives witness to two things:**

*The first is the repentance of the sinner who confesses along with the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ given freely to the sinner. Another witness related to Confession with a priest that might get you thinking is, “what will he think of me?” Since it’s part of nature to want to be accepted and to be thought well of, we wouldn’t want any body to look at us badly. The priest will not think badly of you and say or think to himself that you are a bad person, but he will be happy as the Lord Jesus said “There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7)*

**The second greatest obstacle to confessing is laziness,** laziness prevents us from taking the time and making the effort to prepare well.

**The third obstacle is fear;** fear prevents us from being open and honest with ourselves, and our God before another Christian such as our priest.

When we move beyond our laziness and fear, we will discover that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has become our Father, as well, is very much like the father of the Prodigal Son. He stands on the high place watching for us. When He sees we have taken the smallest step to return to Him, He forgets His dignity and reserve and runs to meet us. He opens His arms to embrace us, and takes us with Him to the place where He dwells.

**The fourth obstacle is shyness;** one of the most important factors that hinder people from confession is being shy of admitting their sins in front of the priest. We have to overcome that obstacle, for confession is very beneficial to our spiritual life. We are not shy in sinning in front of God, so why are we shy now to admit your sin in front of God’s chosen one? Although shyness is a very difficult feeling, it is beneficial for us, for it makes us feel how bad

and shameful sin is. These feelings are important for us; for as long as we have enjoyed doing sin, it is better that we suffer in confessing our sins. Therefore our fathers have said, “The Sacrament of Confession prevents us from sinning again”.

### **GUIDELINES:**

There are three elements of confession:

#### **First between Me and Myself:**

Confession is not just words you say to the priest, even if these words are truth, but rather it is repentance. We can be sure that the Absolution Prayer without confession and true repentance will not grant us forgiveness of sins. Therefore, repentance is an important step in the Sacrament of Confession.

How do we prepare for confession? We must set aside some time to prepare. This must be a period of time when we will be free from distractions and interruptions. There are four important steps we need to take:

1. **Silence:** We begin by placing ourselves in God’s presence. We say to Him “here I am”. Anyone who has tried this knows what could soon happen, we forget about God quickly. We become bored, and all sorts of thoughts flood our minds. When we realize that our minds have wandered, we should bring our attention back to God through prayer.
2. **Prayer:** Prayer is the single most important thing to do in preparing for Confession. In prayer we ask God to show us what He finds displeasing in us, what He wants us to repent of. Sometimes we don’t know our sins either because we have forgotten them or because we do not examine ourselves and confess frequently, or because we are careless in our spiritual life, which causes us to sin without feeling that we are sinning. In this case, we



have to pray to Him to reveal for us our sins, ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light of His grace upon you, God will then grant you to remember your sins.

3. Reading: Reading can provide the right standard by which we must measure ourselves. Reading from the Holy Bible is most important, it will help us to focus and apply the Holy Scripture to our own sins. What we read we must apply to ourselves, not to our family, friends or neighbor.
4. Reflection: Finally, we must actively take what we gather from our Silence, Prayer and Reading and examine ourselves. To do this successfully, we must have an attitude of self-blame or self-accusation. Self-accusation goes against our nature. It means refusing to make excuses for us.

## **Second: In Front of the priest**

How to confess: When confessing remember that the priest is God's representative. Confess all sins and be honest. Don't give yourself excuses during Confession. Confess your sins even if you know how to overcome them. Be concise and to the point.

H.G. Bishop Youssef told us the following guidelines for confession:

- I. Relationship with God:
  - 1) Prayer
    - a) Wandering thoughts
    - b) Loosing concentration
    - c) Regular basis
  - 2) Reading the Holy Bible
    - a) Regular basis
    - b) With understanding

- 3) Fasting
  - a) Regularly
  - b) From the heart
  - c) Meaningful/meaningless
- 4) Following the commandments
- 5) Metanias

## **II. Relationship with others:**

- 1) With parents
- 2) Talking about/judging others
- 3) Helping (being helpful)
- 4) Criticizing people in church

## **III. Relationship with oneself:**

- 1) Controlling the senses
- 2) Controlling our thoughts
- 3) Do I judge others

## **Third: The Absolution from Sin:**

Prayers of Absolution: After we have made a complete confession before the priest, we kneel with respect saying, "Absolve me, O My Father, from the sins that I already confessed and the hidden ones too. Then the priest puts the cross on our head and prays the absolution.

## **VALIDITY:**

Verbal confession to a priest is necessary for forgiveness of sins as the Lord said to His Pure Apostles: *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained". (John 20:23)*

In reading the Repentance and Confession book by H.G.



Bishop Mettaous, I found the following Holy Bible references:

### **From the Old Testament:**

Confession was a necessary part of the repentance of a sinner who brought the Sacrifice, laid his hand on it's head and confessed his sins to God before the priest, and the priest took the sacrifice and slaughtered it, offering it onto the altar of burnt sacrifice as an atonement for sin.

The Lord says: *"If a person sins or touches any unclean thing or if a person swears he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned, so the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin"* (Leviticus 5:1-6)

When David the King sinned and committed adultery and murder, his conscience did not rebuke him and the Lord sent Nathan to him who persuaded David to confess saying "I have sinned against the Lord", so Nathan the prophet said to David: *"The Lord also has put away your sin, you shall not die."* (Samuel 12) When David confessed to Nathan the prophet, he heard the declaration of putting away his sin and that he would not die the eternal death, but certain punishments were imposed on him, necessary for repentance. Solomon said: *"He who covers his sins will not prosper. But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13)

### **From the New Testament:**

St John the Baptist preached about repentance saying:



"Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand... then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:1-6)

The Lord Jesus Christ gave the authority to the Apostles and their

successors by saying: *"Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will loosed in heaven"* (Matthew 18:18)

After His Glorious Resurrection *"He breathed on them and said to them As the Father sent me, I also send you. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"* (John 20:21,22)

When the Prodigal Son felt his sins, he said, *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight"* (Luke 15:21)

The Holy Book of Acts tells us that the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession was practiced during the days of the Pure Apostles saying: *"And many who had believed came, confessing and telling their deeds"* (Acts 19:18)

Today's youth may experience all the obstacles that were mentioned and maybe more. Being a youth member I know how it feels to be under the pressure of school, peers and parents, following the guidance and advice of the priest will help us grow spiritually and receive heavenly grace.

May the blessing of the Sacrament of Confession be with us all and help us with the salvation of our souls and spiritual lives. Glory be to God forever.