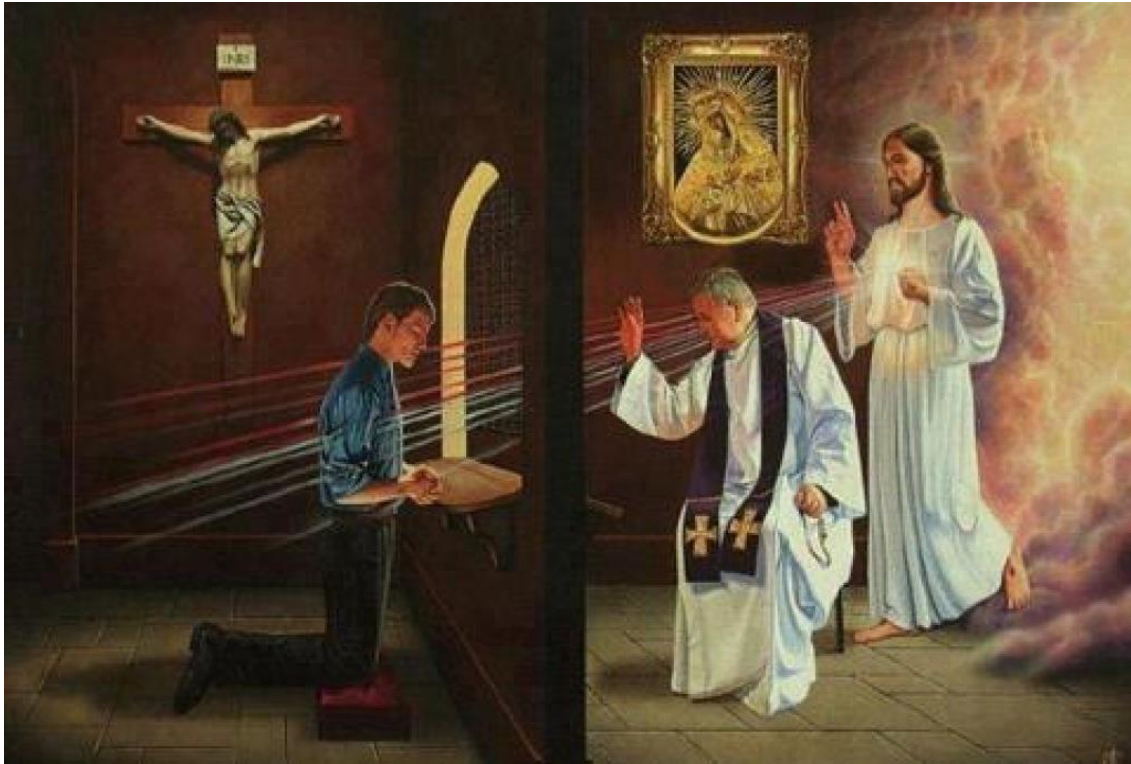


PATH FINDERS

Lesson 16

Basic Christian Prayers:
Elaboration of Confession & Commandments



Preparation for a Good Confession

Introduction:

To understand importance of the Sacrament of Healing or Reconciliation and its practice in the Church, it is necessary to understand why it needs to be done. A sin has double consequences. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God, and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life. On the other hand, every sin – even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment, which must be purified either here on earth or after death in the state of Purgatory. A Christian must strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as prayer and various practices of penance, to become a ‘new man’ and to be purified. (Cf. CCC 1861, 1031, 2447). The whole power of Sacrament of Reconciliation consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship. (Cf. CCC 2035).

According to the Church’s command, “after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess sins” Anyone who is aware of having committed a sin must not receive Holy Communion. Children must go to the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation before receiving Holy Communion (CCC 1385).

Importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The sacrament of Reconciliation, imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: “ be reconciled to God.” (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) He who lives by God’s merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord’s call: “Go; first be reconciled to your brother” (Matt 5:24). The whole power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship. Restoration of divine friendship and divine filiation is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Reconciliation with contrite heart and proper disposition, will surely experience peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.

Other Names of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- It is called the *Sacrament of Conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus’ call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed by sin.
- It is called the *Sacrament of Penance*, since Jesus call to conversion and penance is conversion of the heart, interior conversion.
- It is called the *Sacrament of Confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament.
- It is called the *Sacrament of Forgiveness*, because, through the sacramental absolution of the catholic priest, God grants “pardon and peace” to the penitent.

Examination of Conscience

Before celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, one should prepare oneself with an examination of conscience, which involves reflecting prayerfully on one's thoughts, words, and deeds in order to identify any sins. Examining one's own conscience reveals to oneself, the areas that has to be improved. It thus helps to begin again the journey of faith. Examination of conscience also helps to recall to our mind, our sins and failures during the period from our last confession to the present day. In simple words it is a quiet personal reflection about our sinful state before approaching the priest at the confessional.

An examination of conscience in view of the confession traditionally follows the outline of the Ten Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, the seven capital sins, etc. Let us have a brief look on them:

A. Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.

- Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God? Did I deny that I was a Catholic? Did I get involved with non-Catholic worship? Was I involved in Superstition, Idolatry, Irreligion, Magic, Atheism or Agnosticism?, etc.

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people? Did I blaspheme God or use/take God's name in vain, curse or break an oath or vow?, etc.

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on Holy Days of Obligation (Jan. 1; the Ascension; Aug. 15; Nov. 1; Dec. 8; Dec. 25)? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord's Day, and proper relaxation of mind and body?, etc.

4. Honour your father and your mother.

- Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?, etc.

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I harmed another through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind? Did I plan to kill/hurt grievously someone?, etc.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself? Did I wilfully entertain impure thoughts or desires? Did I deliberately look at impure or pornographic content on TV/ mobile / devices, adult videos, dances, magazines, pictures, or movies?, etc.

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I taken or wasted, time or resources that belonged to another? Have I taken advantage of the labourers, poor, inexperienced, or less fortunate?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

- Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another? Did I tell lies? Deliberately to deceive., etc.

9. You shall not covet your neighbour's spouse.

- Have I honoured my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love? Have I wilfully lusted after another woman other than whom God gave me?, etc.

10. You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

- Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily? Am I jealous of what another one has (abilities, talents, job, money, beauty, vehicle, age, house, success etc.)?, etc.

B. Five Precepts of the Church

1. Did I attend Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation?
2. Did I neglect my annual confession?
3. Did I neglect my Easter duty to receive Holy Communion during the Easter time?
4. Did I fast and follow complete abstinence on the days appointed?
5. Did I fail to support the church and pastors when I was able to?
6. Did I follow not to marry persons who are not Catholics, or who are related to us within a forbidden degree of kindred, nor privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at forbidden times?

C. Sins against the Holy Spirit

1. Presumption of Salvation: A thought that Salvation is guaranteed by what one has done.

2. Despair of salvation: An attitude of losing hope of Salvation, not believing in God's justice and power.
3. Denying a Truth: Denial of a truth concerning the matters of Faith recognised as such by the Magisterium of the Church.
4. Envy the Grace: Envy what God gives other people.
5. Obstinacy in sin: It is the firm will to continue in error and sin even after receiving the light and help of the Holy Spirit.
6. Final impenitence: It is the result of an entire life of rejecting God. Even at the hour of death, such a person refuses to approach the Father with humility. He doesn't open himself to the Holy Spirit's invitation.

D. Deadly (Capital) Sins and their Contrary Virtues

a. **Pride:** It is the deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Disobedience (failure/refusal to obey authority), Boastfulness (showing excessive pride) Discord (lack of harmony), etc.

Contrary Virtue: **Humility** - It is to view modestly one's own importance.

b. **Anger:** It is strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Indignation (annoyance provoked by what is perceived to be unfair), Swelling of the Mind (gradual building of strong feelings of annoyance, displeasure, hostility), Clamour (raising the voice), etc.

Contrary Virtue: **Forgiveness** - It is the action or process of forgiving others.

c. **Lust:** Lust means to have a very strong sexual desire; or a strong passionate desire for something. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Blindness of Mind (turning a blind-eye and acting on temptations), Impulsiveness (acting without thinking/forethought), Excessive Self-love (tending to be smug and superior)

Contrary Virtue: **Chastity** - Chastity means purity; freedom from immorality, especially of a sexual nature.

d. **Envy:** It is a feeling of discontented or resentful longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or blessings. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Hatred (intense dislike / ill-will) Tale-bearing (malicious gossip/revealing secrets) Detraction (reduce or take away worth or value of a person or thing)

*Contrary Virtue: **Admiration*** - Admiration means, having respect and warm approval of the goodness of others.

e. **Gluttony**: It is to have an excess of food, drink, or pleasure. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Unseemly Joy (Improper / Inappropriate), Vulgarly (lacking sophistication or good taste), Loquaciousness (Talking Way too Much)

*Contrary Virtue: **Temperance*** - It means, self-discipline; avoidance of all forms of indulgence.

f. **Avarice**: Avarice is obsession with Money or Covetousness: wanting what other people have. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Treachery (deceptive / betrayal of trust) Fraud (wrongful or criminal deception), Falsehood (lie, untruth) Perjury (willingly telling a lie after taking an oath)

*Contrary Virtue: **Generosity*** - Generosity means the quality of being kind and generous)

g. **Sloth**: Sloth is the aversion towards seeking the spiritual disciplines: prayer, bible study, church attendance, etc. Some of the others sins that it may lead to are: Malice (intention or desire to do evil), Spite (desire to hurt, annoy or offend), Faintheartedness (timid, lacking courage)

*Contrary Virtue: **Zeal*** - To have great energy or enthusiasm.

E. My Last Confession

1. When did I make my last confession?
2. Have I taken sufficient pains to awaken contrition?
3. Did I omit to confess a mortal sin either intentionally or through forgetfulness?
4. Did I tell all my sins to the Priest in last confession or have concealed them willfully?
5. Did I intentionally neglect to say the penance which the priest told to do, or was so careless as to forget it?
6. Have I carried out the resolutions I made at my last confession or have paid no heed at all to them?

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION

O most merciful God, I most humbly thank Thee for all Thy mercies unto me. It is because of Thy great mercy that I have not fallen into greater and more grievous sins than those which I have committed and that I have not been cut off and cast into hell.

O Grant me, I beseech Thee, perfect contrition for my sins, that I may detest them with the deepest sorrow of heart. Send forth Thy light into my soul and discover to me all those sins which I ought to confess at this time.

O Most gracious Virgin Mary, beloved Mother of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, intercede for me with Him. Obtain for me full remission of my sins and perfect amendment of life.

I CONFESS

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned through my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sister, to pray for me to the Lord our God

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins and detest them above all things, because they deserve your dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour Jesus Christ, and most of all because they offend Your infinite goodness, and I firmly resolve, by the help of Your grace, never to offend You again and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin. Amen.

The Five Steps for a Good Confession

1. Examination of Conscience:

You should recollect your sins by asking yourself the following questions:

Have I ever violated the commandments of God? Have I committed any capital sins? Have I observed the precepts of the church? Could I practice all possible virtues in my life?

It would be better if you write your sins on a piece of paper, to help you recollect and confess all your sins. After the confession tear it and throw it away.

2. Sense of Contrition:

After you recall all your sins, you should repent, with these thoughts in your mind very silently and peacefully. Did my sins hurt Jesus and are they the cause of His pain and suffering? I sinned against Him knowingly or unknowingly? Am I really sad about it?

3. Pledge not to Sin again:

- After you repent, you should resolve.
- I will not make Jesus sad through my sins. I will not sin again. I am ready to die than to sin.

- Once you have gathered your thoughts, repented, and said sorry to Jesus, recite the prayer “I Confess” before confessing your sins to the Priest.

4. Confessing to a Priest:

Go to the confessional, stand in silence, recollect, and again remember your sins and wait for your turn. When the person ahead of you is done with his or her confession, go and kneel at the confessional and say your sins softly but clearly. It would be better if you write your sins on a piece of paper and after the confession tear it and throw it away or dispose it off properly.

5. Penance:

After the confession is done, do the penance given by the priest with a sincere heart. Give thanks to Jesus in your heart for forgiving your sins. Kneel before Jesus in the Tabernacle, look at Jesus and say “I love you Jesus, I'm sorry, help me not to sin again. Abide in me always, never let me be separated from you”.

Say your penance and say “I thank you Jesus, I love you Jesus, I praise you Jesus, I worship you Jesus” - 3 times or express thanks to Jesus in your own words as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Apart from the penance given by the priest, we should practise works of mercy and if we have brought any loss to anybody through our actions we have to compensate for it just like Zacchaeus did.(Lk 19: 1-10)

How to Confess to the Priest

1. The **Priest will often begin with the Sign of the Cross** or a greeting and blessing.
2. Respond by saying “**Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been (number of days, weeks, months, etc.) since my last confession. These are my sins: ”**
3. **Confess all mortal sins** committed since your last confession by kind and number (this is important). Hold **NOTHING** back. You may also confess any venial sins.
4. At the end of your confession say these or similar words: “**For these and all the sins of my life I am sorry.**” By this you tell the priest that you are completed / finished. Otherwise, he might think you are still thinking or trying to summon the courage to tell ‘the big one’.
5. **Listen to the priest** for the advice and penance. Then priest will give you the **absolution**. Respond to the absolution prayer with “**Amen**”
6. Next, say, **the Act of Contrition**.
7. **Perform the penance** as advised by the priest and say thanks to Almighty God for His Infinite Mercy and the graces received.