

WHY SHOULD I GO TO CONFESSION?

by:

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Through the sacrament of penance (confession), the Lord forgives our sins, restores us to a state of grace and gives us the strength to persevere in virtue.

The sacrament of penance is required of all practicing Catholics at least once a year (and if only once, during Lent), according to Canon Law. Yet there are many more reasons than this to regularly return to the Lord through this “sacrament of divine mercy”.

Sin separates us from the love of the Lord. Mortal, or grave, sins are so-called because they literally bring death to our union with God — a death that only God can heal. Yet, even venial sins – which are less grievous than mortal sins — harden our hearts and lead us away from virtue.

Absolution through the sacrament of penance restores us to a state of grace and union with God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: “The whole power of the sacrament of penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship” (no. 1468).

Receiving absolution also reconciles us with the Church. When we sin, we not only harm our relationship with God, but also with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The sacrament of penance reinstates us into the ecclesial communion of the Church and repairs the rift we have caused by our actions (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 469).

When we confess our sins in the sacrament of penance, we are forgiven and reunited with God and his Church as well as strengthened for our journey towards heaven. Those who learned from the *Baltimore Catechism* may recall that “[a] sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace” (574). Through the sacrament of penance, we are restored by sanctifying grace and are also given sacramental grace to persevere in virtue and avoid temptation in the future.

And yet, in spite of all these motives, we have yet to touch on the most important to reason to go the sacrament of penance, regardless of how long it has been since you last went or how grave your sins are — the Lord is waiting for you. “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment” (Joel 2:12-13).

The sacrament of penance is crucial to living a virtuous life of friendship with the Lord. As St. Josemaría Escrivá says of the sacrament: “In this wonderful sacrament, our Lord cleanses your soul and fills you with joy and strength to prevent you from giving up the fight, and to help you keep returning to God unwearied, when everything seems black” (*Friends of God*, no. 214).

· Taken from *aleteia.org* February 13, 2013.