

56 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” (Mt. 9: 2)

This incident described in today's gospel was to give credit to the great faith of those who took extra ordinary effort to present the sick man (a sinner too) to Jesus, to manifest **his power of forgiving sins**.

All pardon for sins ultimately comes from Christ's finished work on Calvary, but how is this pardon received by individuals? Did Christ leave us any means within the Church to take away sins? The Bible says **he gave us two means**.

Baptism was given as the first means to take away the sin inherited from Adam (original sin) and any sins we personally committed before baptism—sins we personally commit are called actual sins, because they come from our own acts. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowds, "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. " (Acts 2:38), and when Paul was baptized he was told, " And now why tarriest thou? Rise up, and **be baptized, and wash away thy sins**, invoking his name" (Acts 22:16). And so, Peter later wrote, "Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21).

The Sacrament of penance was given as another means to forgive sins committed after baptism. During his life, Christ forgave sins, as in the case of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) and the woman who anointed his feet (Luke 7:48). He exercised this power in his human capacity as the Messiah or Son of man, telling us, "But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Matt. 9:6), which is why the Gospel writer himself explains that God gave such power to men: "And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men." (Matt. 9:8).

Since he would not always be with the Church visibly, Christ gave this power to other men, so the Church, which is the continuation of his presence throughout time (Matt. 28:20), would be able to offer forgiveness to future generations. He gave his power to the apostles, and it was a power that could be passed on to their successors and agents, since the apostles wouldn't always be on earth either, but people would still be sinning.

God had sent Jesus to forgive sins, but after his resurrection Jesus told the apostles, "Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. [22] When he had said this, **he breathed on them**; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. [23] **Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.**" (John 20:21–23). (This is one of only two times we are told that God breathed on man, the other being in Genesis 2:7, when he made man a living soul.) It emphasizes how important was **the establishment of the sacrament of penance**

1. The extra ordinary effort to approach the sacrament of confession.

The paralytic was carried on a litter by four men. The crowd was so great that they were unable to enter by the door of the house and reach Jesus. So, what they did? They climbed upon the roof, removed the tiling and made a hole through the ceiling – to present the sick man to Jesus.

“And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the sick man: Thy sins are forgiven, arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.”

This is a beautiful lesson for us **to take special effort to find a good confessor** and present our soul to Jesus in the sacrament of confession, and **to eradicate our sinful habits** and be sanctified.

2. The power of forgiving sins.

Seeing that sin was the cause of the sick man’s affliction Jesus declared that the man’s sins were forgiven! He said this that the scribes may know that **the Son of man has power to forgive sins**.

It was to show his own power as the physician of souls, and to prove the reality of the invisible cure from sin that Jesus performed before the eyes of the multitude – a miracle of bodily cure.

3. The greatness of the power of forgiving sins

“This power was committed to the priests and bishops of the Catholic Church. It is a power not given to all, but to bishops and priests only, for sins can be forgiven only through sacraments, when duly administered. The Church has received no power otherwise to remit sins.” (Council of Trent)

Christ was the first man to receive this power because he was God; and he bestowed this gift upon **his mystical body** – the Catholic Church.

The Apostles and his successors receive this power in as much as they are united with the mystical body of Christ, since it is the effect of an infinite power and the result of shedding his own blood! (The protestants are not united with the mystical body of Christ; and how about the “Sedae Vacabtists”?). But it is true to say that **outside Catholic Church there is no forgiveness of sin**.

10 Practical Ways To Make A Good Traditional Catholic Confession

Making a good or bad confession can depend on where you would spend your eternity, Heaven or Hell. So, here is a list of practical suggestions to help you make a good and sincere Confession.

1) **Examination of Conscience.** Before planning on going to confession, it is of utmost importance to find a Traditional Examination of Conscience. Then, take time and quietly and prayerfully go over the examination of Conscience. Write down all the sins you have now committed. Take this with you to the confessional.

2) **Sincere Contrition.** We need to work on truly being contrite for having sinned against God. That means we see that we were guilty of breaking God's loving laws. We take full responsibility for having disobeyed God. We need to be very careful to not let any excuses cover over our sins but take responsibility for our actions. Do not blame it on circumstances or other people. They will not be there when you are judged; just you and God.

3) **Deep Sorrow.** Once we are contrite and have taken responsibility for having sinned, we also need to work on a true and deep sorrow for having done the sin. This means meditating on the pains we caused for Jesus and the harm we have done to ourselves and to others when we sinned. The monks use to have a cry room. It was not for babies who cried. It was a room where they went and cried for having been so sinful and having crucified Jesus and hurt others. This is true sorrow.

4) **Firm Resolution to Sin No More.** So, we are contrite, we are sorry, but now we need to do something that has to be diligently worked on. Before going to confess, be sure you have a firm resolution to change your way of living and especially in the area of your life that is displeasing to God.

5) **Concrete Plans to Avoid the Occasion of Sin.** If the internet is causing you to sin, you need to be willing to give up using the internet. If a person is tempting you to sin, (a few examples: to have sex, use drugs, smoking, drinking or gambling), that person has to be avoided. Many so-called friends or family members are really the instruments of the devil to get us to sin. Jesus says it is better to pluck out an eye, cut off a hand, or a foot rather than to be thrown into hell for all eternity. Whatever it is that is causing you to sin, **get rid of it.**

6) **Love for God and Fear of God's Judgement.** We should want to make a good confession because we love God. When we work on a loving friendship with God, we want to love Him, not hurt Him. So, in our prayer life, working on true love of God can really help us to please Him rather than to shun His grace that is sustaining our souls. But if you cannot stop sinning out of love, at least do it for fear of God's judgement and damnation. Fear is better than remaining in a state of sin. When you have "fear of God", you will clean up your soul in confession, even when it may be embarrassing. The devil always helps us forget about embarrassment when we are in the act of sinning. But as soon as we are in the line to confess, he makes sure to fill us back up with

embarrassment so that we become afraid to confess or tell all the details of our shameful sins.

7) Do not Withhold Sins. A confession is not valid when we purposely withhold a sin because we are afraid to confess it. If, on the other hand, you forget to confess it by accident, your confession is still valid. Get every serious sin out. Start with the most embarrassing sins first. The rest will be much easier. You will be eternally happy you had the humility and guts to confess the most serious sins. You will feel a weight lifted of your shoulders and your soul as well. If you forget by accident, confess the sins the next time.

8) Be Aware That God is Very Merciful. When approaching the confessional, keep in mind that you are not approaching a mere man (the priest). No, you are approaching the God of Mercy and forgiveness. The priest is just His instrument like a telephone. You talk to God through the priest and God talks to you through the priest. But it is the Precious Blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross, that forgives your sins. But that depends on you being totally honest, truly sorry and have firm resolution to sin no more.

9) Confess Sins of Omission As Well. Many times, we think that a sin is breaking one of God's laws. But there are many sins of omission. This means not doing what we should have done. An example would be when parents failed to educate their children well in the Catholic Faith. When we have failed to help at church. When we have failed to help the poor.

10) Humility, Humility, and more Humility. Of all things that will help us to make a sincere, complete, sorrowful confession, it would have to be staying humble. The devil will try his best to keep you in pride so that you cannot make a good confession. Before going to confession, reflect on Jesus' and Mary's humility. If we throw pride out of our souls and minds and let humility in, it will be so much easier to confess those shameful sins and be ready to stop sinning.

God pours out graces on those who are sincerely sorry and honest through the great Sacrament of Confession. So, we get up, and walk back to Our Father's house and pour out our soul in Confession. The sacrament of confession is a powerful medicine that rather cures our habit of sin, than being an excuse to remain in it. Thank God for being so blessed to be traditional Catholics and have God's divine mercy so close to us in the Sacrament of Holy Confession.