



Student Worksheet

Lesson 3: WHY CONFESS MY SINS TO A PRIEST?

Opening Prayer

LEADER

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father of mercy, through the death and resurrection of your Son, you have brought us back to yourself. May we find your pardon and peace through the sacrament of reconciliation, which was instituted by Christ and is administered through priests of your Church. Open our ears to hear and help us to understand this sacrament so that we may benefit from the healing you offer us. In Jesus' name we pray.

Fr. Mike's Thought Train

THE BIG QUESTION

Why must we confess our sins to a priest? Why can't we go right to God?

THE SHORT ANSWER

We can certainly "go right to God," asking him for his mercy and forgiveness for our sins. But Jesus gave his apostles—and their successors—the authority to forgive sins (see John 20:23). So, simply speaking, we confess our sins to a priest because Jesus wants it that way.

THE BREAKDOWN

- We can confess our sins to God, saying we are sorry and asking for forgiveness. But that's not all.
- We must confess our mortal sins to a priest in the sacrament of reconciliation. Why? Because Jesus has made his priests to be mediators of his grace in confession.
 - * *What is a mediator? A mediator, in this sense, is one who stands before God for us.*
 - * *Mediators are important in God's plan.*
- We must confess our sins to a priest in the sacrament of reconciliation because Jesus established this sacrament.
 - * *Jesus instituted the sacrament of confession when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection (see John 20:21-23).*
 - * *The early Church celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation (see James 5).*
- Do priests really forgive sins? Yes, with the power God has given them. God forgives us through the words of absolution spoken by the priest in confession.

- Using Jesus' gift of reconciliation involves a priest to reconcile us not only with God but with the Church, whom we have also hurt by our sins.
- If we are honest with ourselves, the reason we have trouble with the sacrament of reconciliation is because it can be uncomfortable to admit our sins.
- Confession is not a place of defeat but of victory.
 - * *We speak the truth about our sins and receive God's forgiveness.*
 - * *We hear the wonderful words of absolution, "I absolve you of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*
- So go to confession! What are you waiting for?

Talk It Out

1. How do we know that Jesus instituted the sacrament of reconciliation?
2. How do we know that there was confession in the early Church?
3. What is a mediator?
4. How did the priest in Fr. Mike's story explain mediation to a Baptist minister?
5. How is confession a victory?
6. Have you ever been hesitant to go to confession? Why? How does Fr. Mike's explanation sit with you?
7. What do you think would help you to better prepare to make a good confession? What concrete steps can you take?
8. Does anyone want to talk about the fruits and benefits of the sacrament of reconciliation in your own life? Why do you go? What have you experienced?

Hands On

CONFESSION SIMULATOR ACTIVITY

Food for Thought

1. Was there a time in your life when forgiveness was key to healing a relationship? What was that like? Take some time to reflect and write down your thoughts.
2. Being prepared for confession takes time and reflection. Write down three questions that you could ask yourself that will help you to make a good confession.
3. The act of contrition is a prayer in which we express sorrow for our sins and a resolve to avoid near occasions of sin in the future. While there is a traditional form for this prayer, it can be helpful to write your own personal act of contrition. Take a few minutes to do so.

Closing Prayer

READER (JOHN 20:19-23)

“On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

LEADER

God always seeks to ready our hearts to receive his mercy. We pause now, mindful of sins and of God’s great mercy, and pray an act of contrition:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.