

## **Why do Catholics go to a priest to confess their sins when they can just confess directly to Jesus?**

"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' (John 20:22-23). Jesus himself established the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as he did all of the other Sacraments. When we confess our sins to a priest, we are in the presence of Jesus himself. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

No mere man can forgive sins; only God can (Mark 2:7), which is why the priest performs the absolution "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." One of the primary reasons Jesus wanted the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be a personal encounter was so that the penitent would hear the words of absolution and truly believe he was forgiven. We sometimes wonder if God really hears us when we tell him we are sorry. During the absolution we hear not the priest but Jesus Christ himself telling us we are indeed forgiven.

True (perfect) contrition and a firm commitment to avoid falling back into sin are required for us to receive God's forgiveness; however, in confessing to a priest, even imperfect contrition (fear of the just punishment we deserve) is enough for our sins to be forgiven. And don't forget, you **MUST** confess any mortal sin to a priest prior to receiving the Eucharist even if you "know" you are truly sorry for your sin and are forgiven. The Sacraments are the primary means of Christians receiving God's grace - beginning with the greatest Sacrament of the Eucharist, they are the greatest gifts God has given us to help us to remain in a state of grace and live a holy life. We should strive to go to confession as a prevention instead of a cure!

(Mark 2:7; John 20:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; James 5:14-15)

Catholicism Frequently Asked Questions from the Transporter Information Services.

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