

# Year of Faith

Issue Number 2

St Ethelbert's Parish, Deane, Bolton



## Why do I have to go to confession?

Three devils-in-training came up to earth to practice their wiles. Their teacher asked them to describe how they planned to get people to sin. The first said, 'I'll use the old method of telling them there is no God, so sin to your heart's delight.' The second devil said, 'I'll convince them there is no hell, so sin all you want.' The third novice, the cleverest of all, responded, 'I'll be subtle. I'll tell them, 'Why worry? Sin all you want now. You can always repent and be good later.'" Going to confession is a declaration to yourself and to your fellow Christians: I want to be good--right now!" The sacrament of penance, also known as the sacrament of reconciliation, is Jesus' gift to the church to assure us of his forgiveness and to lighten our hearts. How often should you go to confession? Church law requires Catholics to confess once a year if they are consciously aware of committing a mortal sin. This law supports another church regulation to receive the eucharist at least once a year at Easter time. This is a bare minimum for being a practicing Catholic. To receive the eucharist worthily, you should be in a friendship relationship with Jesus, that is, free of mortal sin. The church recommends regular celebration of this sacrament--for example, during Advent and Lent, on a school retreat, during times of renewal, even every month or so. Why should you go to confession? Here are some excellent reasons:

### In this Issue:

#### WHY CONFESSION?

Four good reasons to start again. Have a look...

#### ACT OF CONTRITION

Two Prayers that sum up what Reconciliation is all about. Learn them by heart if you can.

#### CONFESSION GUIDE

Based on the Ten Commandments. An easy way for a worthy Examination of Conscience. Have a look!

✓ **To experience Christ's love firsthand.** Jesus forgave sin. He continues to do so today through his church and his representatives-- bishops and priests--to whom he gave power to forgive in his name: "If you forgive any one's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain any one's sins, they are retained" (Jn 20:23). It is very human to want some assurance of love and forgiveness when we have sinned and yet repented. Jesus left this great sign of love to lift our burdens and comfort us.

✓ **To tell the truth about ourselves.** We all sin. We all carry guilt. The New Testament instructs: If we say, "We have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and truth has no place in us; if we acknowledge our sins, he is trustworthy and upright, so that he will forgive our sins and will cleanse us from all evil" (1 Jn 1:8-9). When we confess our sins aloud to Christ's representative, the priest, we overcome self deception. We have named our sins, a sure sign of contrition and true repentance. Modern psychology tells us that confession is good for the soul. It lifts burdens, relieves guilt, forgives sin, and starts you on a new path on the spiritual journey. You should not be afraid to be honest in confession. Remember always that the sacrament of reconciliation is a sacrament of love.

✓ **To reconcile with others.** Sin is never an isolated affair. It alienates a person from God, self, and others. Confession acknowledges that we need to reconcile ourselves to God and to those whom we have harmed. The sacrament of reconciliation heals our sinfulness, repairs our relationship with the Christian community, and challenges us to transform the sinful world in which we live.

✓ **To grow in holiness.** The sacrament of reconciliation intensifies our love of Jesus. It gives us a more sensitive conscience, so we can look at reality with the eyes of Christ. Going to confession can counteract spiritual laziness and combat bad habits and attitudes. It can draw us closer to God and our brothers and sisters. It can teach us to detest sin and love virtue.





## A Guide to Confession

### Five Steps for a good Confession

- ✓ Examine your conscience.
- ✓ Be sorry for your sins.
- ✓ Confess your sins.
- ✓ Resolve to amend your life.
- ✓ After your confession, do the penance the priest assigns.

### Procedure in the Confessional

You say:

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been - (state the length of time) - since my last confession. These are my sins."

Then tell your sins. When you have finished telling your sins, you should say:

"For these and all the sins of my past life I am truly sorry."

The priest now gives the necessary advice, gives your penance and asks you to say the Act of Contrition (in some form). Then wait and listen as the priest gives the absolution. Then say leave the confessional and perform the penance assigned by the priest.

### Examination of Conscience

#### ☞ I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

Do I give God time every day in prayer?

Do I seek to love Him with my whole heart?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

Have I used God's name in vain: lightly or carelessly?

Have I been angry with God?

Have I wished evil upon any other person?

Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?

#### ☞ REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?

Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?

Do I do needless work on Sunday?

#### ☞ HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

Do I honour and obey my parents?

Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and children?

Have I given my family good religious example?

Do I try to bring peace into my home life?

Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion? Have I physically harmed anyone? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin?

Have I been angry or resentful? Have I harboured hatred in my heart?

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#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action?

Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity?

Do I seek to be pure in my thoughts, words and actions?

Am I careful to dress modestly, so as not to tempt others?

Have I been guilty of masturbation?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

Have I stolen what is not mine?

Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?

Do I waste time at work, school or at home?

Do I gamble excessively, thereby denying my family of their needs?

Do I pay my debts promptly?

Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

Have I lied?

Have I gossiped? Harmed someone's reputation?

Have I spoken behind someone else's back?

Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?

Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE.

Have I consented to impure thoughts? Have I caused them by impure television, films, books, magazines or internet?

Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations? Do I listen to, or engage in, impure conversations or jokes?

#### ☞ YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

Am I jealous of what other people have? Do I envy other people's families or possessions?

Am I greedy or selfish?

Are material possessions the purpose of my life?

Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?

## An Act of Contrition

"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all My love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

Amen." **OR**

"O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against You, and by the help of Your grace, I will not sin again.

Amen.

Have I engaged in any sexual activity before marriage or outside of marriage?

Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control?

Has each sexual act in my marriage been open to the transmission of new life?

Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?