

CONFESSION

10 Reasons to Confess

5 HUMAN REASONS

1. Sin aggravates you.

Sin leads to depression and anxiety; it violates the plan for happy living that's built into our very being by God.

2. Sin makes you aggravating.

The ancient philosopher Aristotle said that we are defined by our choices. He was right. Our sins become part of who we are. They shape our personality, bending us one way or another, unless we fix them.

3. We need to say it.

If you break something that's important to a friend, you wouldn't feel satisfied with a general feeling of regret. You want to *say*, "I'm sorry," and try to replace the loss. Sin is no different.

4. Confessing helps you know yourself.

We get ourselves wrong: We convince ourselves that we are righteous and great, or we obsess about our faults and blow them out of proportion. Confession forces us to look at our lives objectively, with the priest.

5. Confessing strengthens us.

When are we stronger: When we avoid thinking of our sins, or when we confront them, deal with them, and move on? As the Catechism puts it, "Sin creates a proclivity to sin" (1865). Confessing stops the cycle.

5 SPIRITUAL REASONS

1. Freedom means choices count.

The world tries to tell us that freedom means your choices don't matter. In reality, freedom means your choices

count. As the Catechism points out, mortal sin, unconfessed, "causes exclusion from Christ's Kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices forever, with no turning back" (1861).

2. Confession makes you freer.

After confession, people smile like a heavy burden was lifted from their shoulders. The guilt is gone. They can now make new choices count: choices for God, not against him.

As Pope Benedict XVI put it: "Confession helps us to make our consciences more alert, more open, and hence, it also helps us to mature spiritually and as human persons."

3. Confession is a personal encounter with Christ.

In confession, it's Christ that heals and forgives us, through the ministry of the priest. We have a personal encounter with Christ in the confessional. Just like the shepherds and Magi at the crèche, we find awe and humility. And just like the saints at the crucifixion, we find gratitude, repentance, and peace.

4. Confessing mortal sin is required.

You can't go to Communion — or be at peace with God — without confessing mortal sins. This is bare-minimum Christianity, one of the precepts of the Church: You must confess sins once a year, and as soon as possible when you are aware of committing a mortal sin.

Mortal sin definition: "One commits a mortal sin when there are simultaneously present: grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent" (Compendium of the Catechism, 395).

Some common sins that constitute grave matter, according to "Happy Are

Those Who Are Called to His Supper" (U.S. bishops, 2006):

Missing Mass — "Failing to worship God by missing Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation without a serious reason, such as sickness or the absence of a priest"

Abortion and euthanasia — "Committing murder, including abortion and euthanasia, harboring deliberate hatred of others"

Any extramarital sexual activity — "Engaging in sexual activity outside the bonds of a valid marriage"

Theft — Including "serious fraud, or other immoral business practices"

Pornography — "Producing, marketing, or indulging in pornography"

Slander, hatred, and envy — "Speaking maliciously or slandering people in a way that seriously undermines their good name"

5. You also tidy "venial" messes in your house.

Even if you aren't conscious of a serious sin, it is still highly recommended that you go to confession regularly, say, once a month.

As Pope Benedict XVI put it: "We clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen, but it builds up. Something similar can be said about the soul."

GUIDE TO ART

- 45 Ancient confessional and icon of Christ
- 46 Confessional, St. Peter's Basilica, Rome
- 48 P. Batoni, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 1773
- 50 Pietro Longhi (1702-1785), *The Confession*
- 52 G. Crespi, *St. John of Nepomuk Confessing*, 1712
- 54 C.W.E. Dietrich, *Christ and the Adulteress*, 1753