

## **FORGIVEN Session 3: Embraced in Mercy**

When we learn to trust in God's mercy, we don't have to be afraid to face our sins. That mercy is present to us in a very real way in the confessional through the ministry of the priest. God's merciful love shapes every word and action of the sacrament, and when we prepare for it honestly and prayerfully, we will be open to receiving the fullness of his grace.

- Can you describe a time when you had to take a risk and trust?
- What would you like the courage to do?

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." —Proverbs 28:13

### **Session Overview:**

- Understand why we shouldn't be afraid or embarrassed to go to Confession.
- Recognize that sins can be mortal or venial, committed in thought, word, action, and inaction.
- Learn how to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by making an examination of conscience.
- Understand the order and different steps of the Rite of Penance and what they mean and accomplish.

### **Video:**

#### **I. Priests' Perspective on Confession**

- A. It's a joy and privilege to welcome people back to God in the sacrament
- B. Nothing new under the sun—you aren't going to shock the priest with your sin
- C. Absolutely confidential (Seal of Confession)
- D. Admiration for the courage of the penitent
- E. Many priests forget everything they hear in the confessional
- F. Sin is forgiven to make us free to love

#### **II. The Sacrament**

##### **A. Examination of Conscience**

1. We prepare for the Sacrament because we take the encounter with
2. Christ seriously
3. Consider what sins we have committed
4. Keep in mind that we are approaching our loving Father
5. "In my thoughts"—our words and actions have their root in our thoughts
6. "In my words"—we can sin through our speech
7. "In what I have done"—sins of commission; what we most commonly
8. consider as sin
9. "In what I have failed to do" - sins of omission

##### **B. Sign of the Cross**

- C. "**Bless me Father, for I have sinned.** It has been... since my last confession" - gives the priest context.

#### **D. State our sins**

1. Simple, straightforward, honest
2. Humbling but not humiliating
3. List the most serious first, and if you forget a small sin don't worry about it

#### **E. Penance**

1. Act of love and thanksgiving in response to God's forgiveness
2. Addresses some of the practical consequences of sin

#### **F. Act of Contrition**

1. Like a formal apology
2. Can use a memorized prayer or make up your own

#### **G. Absolution**

1. Priest raises his hand over penitent—invokes God's presence
2. Recites the prayer of Absolution—this is the moment of forgiveness
  - a. Father of mercies
  - b. Pardon and peace
  - c. Ministry of the Church

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. In the video we heard that God forgives our sin in order to clear the way for love. Grace increases in our souls similar to the way a fire increases in brightness and heat with the addition of more fuel. Since sanctifying grace is God's very life, how are we to understand an increase of God's life within us when he is already omnipresent and infinite?
2. God's will for our lives is to grow in self-awareness, self-possession, and self-donation. In other words, it is difficult to give ourselves away in love if we are not free to love. And, it is difficult to grow in the freedom necessary to love if we are not aware of what restrains us. How does understanding the purpose of our lives emphasize the importance of a good examination of conscience?
3. A presidential candidate was asked the question: "How do you define sin?" His answer was: "Being out of alignment with my values." What is problematic with this answer?

#### **For Further Study**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1480–1484, 1846–1869

Christopher Walsh, *The Untapped Power of the Sacrament of Penance: A Priest's View* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2005)

Go to USCCB.org to find resources for [Rediscovering the Sacrament of Penance](#).

John A. Kane, *How to Make a Good Confession: A Pocket Guide to Reconciliation with God* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2001)

Augustine Institute: *How to Make a Good Confession* Booklet

FORMED.ORG Talks:

- *7 Secrets of Confession* by Vinny Flynn
- Scott Hahn, *The Healing Power of Confession*
- Father Larry Richards, *Confession*

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### **Examination of Conscience Based on the Ten Commandments**

**1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no false gods before me.** Do I put God before my spouse? My children? My work? Do I believe that God loves me? Do I have any “false gods” in my life like money, fame, power, possessions? Have I been involved in fortunetelling, astrology, palm-reading, or witchcraft? Do I pray daily?

**2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.** Do I use curse words? Have I made oaths or sworn promises to God that I haven’t kept? Have I allowed others to swear in my presence?

**3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.** Do I attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation? Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sundays? Do I avoid unnecessary shopping on Sundays?

**4. Honor your father and mother.** Do I show love to my parents, regardless of their age? Do I help them when I can? Do I respect my employer and others in authority? If I am a parent, have I given a bad example in word or deed to my children? Am I raising my children in the Catholic Faith?

**5. You shall not kill.** Have I killed or seriously injured anyone? Do I gossip? Have I had an abortion or helped someone get an abortion? Have I lost my temper, given in to anger, or harbored resentment against my neighbor? Do I bear grudges? Have I ever harmed anyone physically, mentally, or emotionally? Do I take care of the environment?

**6. You shall not commit adultery.** Have I used pornography? Have I watched movies that are overly violent or sexual? Have I consented to lustful thoughts? Have I masturbated? Have I had premarital sex? Have I treated anyone as an object, rather than a person? Do I eat or drink in excess? Have I lost sobriety through drunkenness or drug use?

**7. You shall not steal. Have I stolen anything?** Do I always give a full day’s work for a full day’s pay? Do I cheat in school or business? Am I fair in paying my employees? Am I honest in paying my taxes? Have I wasted time? Have I been generous in serving the poor?

**8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.** Have I told a lie, even a white lie? Have I told lies to avoid getting in trouble? Have I revealed other people’s secrets? Have I failed to mind my own business? Have I accused someone falsely? Have I judged others harshly? Have I been prejudiced or discriminated against anyone?

**9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.** Have I been unfaithful to my spouse in either my actions or my thoughts? Have I used my wife or husband merely to satisfy my sexual urges? Have I acted inappropriately with those of the opposite sex?

**10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s property.** Have I envied anyone else’s possessions, money, fame, or success? Have I used more than my fair share of resources?