

**Looking for Answers –  
Explore What The Catholic Church Really Teaches –  
Part 11**



**Question:**



Granting that priest do have the power to forgive sins in the name of God, what advantage does confessing one's sins to a priest have over confessing directly to God in private prayer?

**Answer:**

Catholics see several advantages in confessing their sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Penance. First, there is the Church's *guarantee* of forgiveness, which private confessions do not provide; secondly, there is the sacramental grace which private confessions do not provide; and thirdly, there is the expert spiritual counseling which private confessions do not provide. With the Apostles, Catholics recognize that the Church is, in a mysterious way, the Body of Christ still living in the world (Colossians 1:18); therefore they recognize that God will receive their pleas for mercy and forgiveness with far greater compassion if there pleas are voiced within the Church, in union with the Mystical Body of His Divine Son, than if they are voiced privately, independent of the Mystical Body of His Divine Son.

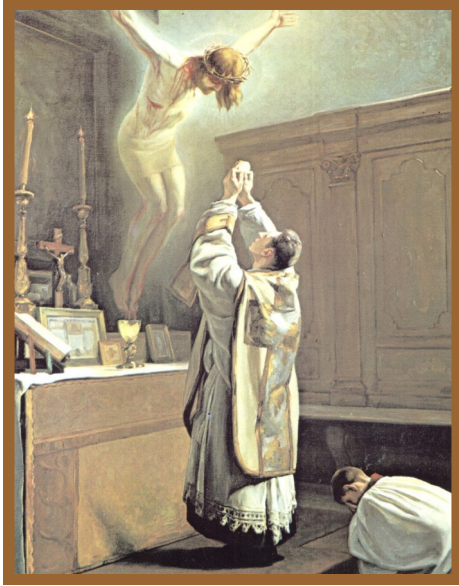
Question:

Do Catholics confess all the sordid details of their sins to the priest?

**Answer:**

No, Catholics are instructed NOT to confess the sordid details of their sins, because it would serve no useful purpose. All that is required of the penitent is the number and classification of sins committed, as well as a sincere contrition for having sinned, a promise to make restitution if the sin has harmed others, a firm resolve to avoid future sins and the occasions of sin, and the carrying out of the penance assigned by the priest (usually the praying of a few prayers). Actually, there are fewer intimacies revealed to the priest in the confessional than are usually revealed to one's doctor, lawyer, or psychiatrist; hence, the Sacrament of

Penance is not the embarrassing experience many non-Catholics imagine it is. Rather, it is a wonderful *relieving* experience, for it is through this sacrament that sins committed after Baptism are washed away by the Blood of Christ and the sinner becomes once again reconciled with God.



#### Question 22:

Why do Catholics believe that Christ is sacrificed in each and every Mass, when Scripture plainly states that He was sacrificed on Calvary once and for all?

#### Answer:

Most non-Catholics do not realize it, but Christ Himself offered the first Mass at the Last Supper. At the Last Supper He offered (sacrificed) Himself to His Father in an un-bloody manner, that is, under the form of bread and wine, in anticipation of His bloody Sacrifice on the Cross to be offered on the following day, Good Friday. In the Mass, not now by anticipation, but rather in retrospect, Christ continues to make that offering of Himself to His Father – by the hands of the priest. *And whilst they were at supper,*

*Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: 'Take ye, and eat. This is My Body.' And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is my Blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.'* (St. Matthew 26:26 – 28).

Christ ordered His Church to perpetuate that sacrificial rite for the continued sanctification of His followers, saying, *Do this for a commemoration of Me* (St. Luke 22:19) – so the Catholic Church complies with His order in the Mass. In other words, every Mass is a re-enactment of Our Lord's one Sacrifice of Calvary. The Mass derives all its value from the Sacrifice of the Cross; the Mass is that same Sacrifice, not another. It is not essentially a sacrifice offered by men (although men also join in), but rather it is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Christ's bloody Sacrifice on Calvary was accomplished *once* (Hebrews 10:10), just as Scripture says. The Catholic Church likewise teaches that the Sacrifice of the Cross was a complete and perfect Sacrifice – offered *once*. But the Apostle Paul – the same Apostle who wrote this text in the book of Hebrews – also bears witness that the sacrificial rite which Christ instituted at the Last Supper is to be **perpetuated** – and that it is not only important for man's sanctification, but is the principle factor in man's final redemption.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23 – 26, St. Paul tells how, at the Last Supper, Our Lord said: *This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this Bread, and drink the Chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come.*

Thus, at every Mass, the Christian has a new opportunity to worship God with this one perfect Sacrifice and to *absorb* more of Christ's saving and sanctifying grace of Calvary. This grace is infinite, and the Christian should continuously grow in this grace until his death. The reason the Mass is offered again and again is not from any imperfection in Christ, but from our imperfect capacity to receive.

Finally, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass fulfills the Old Testament prophecy: *For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation: for My Name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.* (Malachias 1:11). The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered every day throughout the world, and in every Mass the *only true clean oblation* is offered, that is, Christ Himself; thus the Mass is the perfect fulfillment of this prophecy.