



From the Pastor's Desk:

As we continue our journey of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving we ask God to perfect in us our understanding of Confession as a gift of healing.

Returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation: A Guide for Four Sets of Circumstances – PART 2

Our Sins Are Forgiven – We must never forget what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our sins are forgiven! They are taken away. The slate is wiped clean. We have a new beginning - a fresh start. We receive God's mercy and are filled with God's peace. And, once this total and complete forgiveness happens, deep and lasting healing can happen as well.

So, it's a great idea to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to receive a fresh start and to let the grace of healing begin. Most of us are ready to do that because we really miss communion with our God. We really don't like division, conflict, selfishness, negativity, disorder, injustice or dishonesty. We long for integrity and a love which nothing but this Sacrament can offer us.

Considering Four Sets of Circumstances – Every single one of us is completely unique. All our situations bear the unique circumstances that make up our lives. These four hypothetical examples considered here are made up to allow us to understand four types of situations which might prevent us from coming to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They don't represent any real persons or actual situations, but all of us will recognize why circumstances like these might keep us from celebrating the Sacrament. These examples will then help us consider how to choose to act on the invitation to come back to the Sacrament, if our situation is even remotely similar to these made up circumstances.

1: "It's been a long time and a long list of big sins are frightening me."

"I suppose my last confession was 20 or 30 years ago - the last time I had to go with my parents, when I was in high school. I haven't gone mostly because I'm ashamed of my past. And, when I get right down to it, I'm really embarrassed to tell a priest I've been going to Communion all those years. I figured people would see through me and see what a major sinner I am, if I didn't go to Communion. I know I shouldn't have done that, but I did. I was promiscuous in high school and college. I experimented with drugs and risked the lives of others while driving drunk or stoned many times. I lied and created all kinds of fictions to cover-up my activities. The worst thing I've done is when I was a sophomore in college, I got pregnant. [or, if the person is male: the girl I was going with got pregnant] I was so terrified that I panicked and had an abortion. [Or, if the person is a male: I was so terrified, and so was she, so I paid for her to have an abortion]. When I was engaged, before I got married, my spouse and I slept together the whole time, and, we eventually moved in together to save money. All during that time, and after we were married, we practiced birth control. I can't even tell you the number of times I've lied. I'm ashamed that I stole something at work. It was stupid, but I did. I've cheated a little on filling out my taxes for years, but I figured that everybody else does, too. I have impure thoughts and I sometimes masturbate. And, I have all the flaws other people do: I'm impatient and judgmental. Of course, we sometimes missed Mass on Sunday and Holydays and I didn't confess those. So, you can see why it is hard for me to go to Confession and actually tell all this to a priest."

Our Lord's message to anyone remotely carrying baggage like this imaginary person is a message full of great news. First of all, this is what the Sacrament of Reconciliation is all about. It is an invitation to give ourselves a chance to experience the incredible freedom of forgiveness and a new beginning. No one is going to judge us. We won't get interrogated. We'll experience God's mercy, as we never imagined. We don't need to hold on to all this stuff anymore. And, once this is all out of the way, and we are no longer holding on to the guilt of it all, we can begin again to live the adult life of a follower of our Lord. So much healing will follow the forgiveness. [Continued next week] May God +bless you, and yours, now and forever.

Father Anthony