

# The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Confirmation



# Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

- Definition of a sacrament: A sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ that gives us Sanctifying Grace.
- The Sacrament of Confession was instituted by Christ in which forgiveness for sins committed after baptism is granted through the priest's absolution (through his ordination) to those who with true sorrow confess their sins and promise to do penance (reparation).
- Reconciliation delivers the one confessing from the guilt of sin and, in the case of mortal sin, from its eternal punishment.

## Mortal and Venial Sin

There are 2 types of sin to confess:

1. **Mortal Sin:** Sin in which the sinner has “cut off” from God’s grace, because of a grave offense against God. It is a spiritually “dead” soul.
  - a. **CCC 1033** To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called “hell.”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. **Gal 5:19-21** Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness,<sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit,<sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, that those who do such things *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*
  - c. **1 Cor 6:9-10** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; *neither* the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers *will inherit the kingdom of God.*
  - d. **CCC 1395** The Eucharist is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins—that is **proper to the sacrament of Reconciliation.**

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2. **Venial Sin:** That sin which offends God, but the sinner does not lose being in the state of grace.
  - a. **1 Jn 5:16–17** If any one sees his brother committing what is *not a deadly sin*, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is *not deadly*. There is *sin which is deadly*; I do not say that one is to pray for that.<sup>17</sup> All wrongdoing is sin, but there is *sin which is not deadly*.
  - b. **CCC 1394** As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity *wipes away venial sins*.

## God’s Design for the Forgiveness of Sins

Old Testament Typology (Typology is a sign or symbol that represents a reality)

<sup>1</sup> Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed., p. 269). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

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Lev. 5:5-8 “Whoever is guilty in any of these cases *shall confess the sin he has incurred*, and as his *sin offering* . . . he shall bring to the LORD a female animal from the flock. . . . The *priest shall then make atonement for his sin*. He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer the one for the sin offering first.

- Notice that God’s design in the OT is that we *confess* our sin, offer *penance* and the *priest* has an integral part in the process of forgiveness.

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## New Testament

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.

- Note that 1 Jn 1:9 does not say that we are to confess ONLY to God.

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James 5:14-16 Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the *presbyters* of the church, and they should pray over him and . . . and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another that you may be healed.

- Note that we are to confess our sins to “one another.” The context is that the priest (Greek: *presbuteros*) is present to hear your confession. The English word, “priest,” comes from the Greek word “presbyter.”

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## Can Men Forgive Sins?

- God alone has the power to forgive sins and reconcile man to God.

Mark 2:5-7, 10, When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?” . . . But that you may know that the *Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins*—he said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.”

Col 1:19-20 For in him [Jesus] all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and *through him to reconcile to himself all things*, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

2 Cor 5:18-20 God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So *we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us*. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- Jesus came with authority to forgive sins and with authority over all heaven and earth.

Mt 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matt. 9:6-8 “Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.” He rose and went home. When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to men.

Note that “authority was given to men” (plural) not just “a” (singular) man.

- Now he sends his apostles to do the same in his name.

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John 20:21-23, [Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit, Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

- The confession is, therefore, not made only in the secrecy of the penitent's heart.
  - Confession, by God's design, is to a priest with the power to forgive sins, which Christ granted to His Church.

## The Sacrament of Confirmation

Confirmation imparts the following:

- An increase of sanctifying grace which completes the grace received in Baptism.
- A special sacramental grace consisting in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and notably in the strength and courage to confess boldly the name of Christ.

*Isaiah 11:1-3* There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, the spirit of **counsel** and **might**, the spirit of **knowledge** and the **fear of the LORD**.

- An indelible mark, by reason of which the sacrament cannot be received again by the same person.

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CCC 1288 "From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the *laying on of hands* the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of *Baptism*. For this reason in the *Letter to the Hebrews* the doctrine concerning *Baptism* and the *laying on of hands* is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The *imposition of hands* is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the *sacrament of Confirmation*, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church."<sup>99</sup>

### Examples from Scripture

*Acts 8:15-16* they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; <sup>16</sup> for the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>99</sup> Paul VI, *Divinae consortium naturae*, 659; cf. *Acts* 8:15–17; 19:5–6; *Heb* 6:2.

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**Acts 19:5-6** On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

**Heb 6:1-2** Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, with instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

### 1. Wisdom

Wisdom is the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit, because it is the perfection of faith. Through wisdom, we come to value properly those things which we believe through faith. The truths of Christian belief are more important than the things of this world, and wisdom helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly, loving Creation for the sake of God, rather than for its own sake.

### 2. Understanding

Understanding is the second gift of the Holy Spirit, and people sometimes have a hard time understanding how it differs from wisdom. While wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, understanding allows us grasp, at least in a limited way, the very essence of the truths of the Catholic Faith. Through understanding, we gain a certitude about our beliefs that moves beyond faith.

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### 3. Counsel

Counsel, the third gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the cardinal virtue<sup>2</sup> of prudence. Prudence can be practiced by anyone, but counsel is supernatural. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to judge how best to act almost by intuition. Because of the gift of counsel, Christians need not fear to stand up for the truths of the Faith, because the Holy Spirit will guide us in defending those truths.

### 4. Fortitude

While counsel is the perfection of a cardinal virtue, fortitude is both a gift of the Holy Spirit and a cardinal virtue. Fortitude is ranked as the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit because it gives us the strength to follow through on the actions suggested by the gift of counsel. While fortitude is sometimes called *courage*, it goes beyond what we normally think of as courage.

<sup>2</sup> CCC 1805 Four pivotal human virtues (from the Latin *cardo*, "pivot"): prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The human virtues are stable dispositions of the intellect and will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith.

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Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs that allows them to suffer death rather than to renounce the Christian Faith.

### 5. Knowledge

The fifth gift of the Holy Spirit, knowledge, is often confused with both wisdom and understanding. Like wisdom, knowledge is the perfection of faith, but whereas wisdom gives us the desire to judge all things according to the truths of the Catholic Faith, knowledge is the actual ability to do so. Like counsel, it is aimed at our actions in this life. In a limited way, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life the way that God sees them. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can determine God's purpose for our lives and live them accordingly.

### 6. Piety

Piety, the sixth gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the virtue of religion. While we tend to think of religion today as the external elements of our faith, it really means the willingness to worship and to serve God. Piety takes that willingness beyond a sense of duty, so that we desire to worship God and to serve Him out of love, the way that we desire to honor our parents and do what they wish.

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### 7. Fear of the Lord

The seventh and final gift of the Holy Spirit is the fear of the Lord, and perhaps no other gift of the Holy Spirit is so misunderstood. We think of fear and hope as opposites, but the fear of the Lord confirms the theological virtue of hope. This gift of the Holy Spirit gives us the desire not to offend God, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace that we need in order to keep from offending Him. Our desire not to offend God is more than simply a sense of duty; like piety, the fear of the Lord arises out of love.

### The 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit (a product of the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit)

CCC 1832 The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: “charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.” [Self-control – Especially in sexual matters; Chastity – excludes or moderates the indulgence of the sexual appetites]

**Gal 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such there is no law.  
(Generosity, modesty and chastity are in addition to the list in Gal 5:22-23)

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