



Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer
and St. Catherine of Siena

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM:

The Sacrament of Confession and the Eucharistic Revival

Tuesday, July 11 – Tuesday August 1, 2023

Rev. Br. Charles Marie Rooney, O.P.

Series Outline:

1. July 11: The Sacraments and Our Salvation
2. *July 18: Penance, Confession, and the Christian Life*
3. July 25: Inside the Box: The Essential Dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession
4. August 1: Raised to Eternal Life: Confession, Communion, and the Kingdom of Heaven

Talk 2: Penance, Confession, and the Christian Life

Goal for tonight's session: To grow in knowledge of what sin is (original and actual, mortal and venial), how works of penance satisfy for sin, and how the Sacrament of Penance, as a special work of penance, uniquely satisfies for our sins.

I. Review: The Sacraments and Our Salvation

- Sacrament: a sacred sign-action of Christ's Passion that causes the holiness it signifies.
- The sacraments derive their power from and physically unite us to the saving efficacy of Christ's Passion & Death. Living faith (faith with charity) spiritually unites us to Christ.
- The threefold structure of the sacraments:
 - Cause: the sacramental action (matter and form).
 - Effect I: sacramental character (a new power), or an enduring interior mark (e.g., marriage bond, interior contrition, the sanctification of one's sickness, etc.).
 - Effect II: Sanctifying grace in the essence of the soul in a *mode specific to that sacrament*. This grace is the effect that properly heals and elevates us.

II. Sin: Original and Actual, Mortal and Venial

- Original Sin: the state of separation from God and internal disaccord into which every human person has been conceived since Adam (except for the Blessed Virgin Mary).
 - This is God's punishment upon the human race for the *first sin* of Adam and Eve.
- Actual Sin: a thought, word, or deed against the eternal law of God.
 - Sin is not merely a broken rule. It harms the order of God's creation. It harms us.
- The state of grace: the condition of having a mind and will that are in union with God in faith, hope, and love. The state of grace makes us *participants of the divine nature*.
 - Grace in the essence of the soul; indwelling Trinity; infused virtues and Gifts of HS.
- Mortal sin: a grave (contrary to divine precept) actual sin that is knowingly and freely performed. Such an act converts the will of the sinner *away from God* and *toward* a created, finite good. Friendship with God is thus ruptured, killing the life of grace in the soul.
- Venial sin: an actual sin that diminishes but does not destroy the life of grace in the soul.

III. Penance: Christ's Satisfaction and Ours

- Repentance: being *sorry* or *regretful* for a past action by withdrawing the will from it.
 - Repentance thus converts the will from the created good back to God.
- Satisfaction: the act of satisfying (*satis-facere*, “doing enough”) or repaying the debt for sin.
 - Satisfaction perfects a penitential withdrawal of the will from sin and toward God.
 - Atonement (at-one-ment): a related term that emphasizes satisfaction’s goal: union.
- Christ’s Satisfaction
 - Jesus Christ vicariously satisfies for our sins through the merit of the perfect love with which he gave up his life on the Cross. His perfect, divine love realized through his human will was ((superabundantly) meritorious *enough* to satisfy for all the sins of the human race—past, present, and future.
- Our Satisfaction in Christ
 - We have access to Christ’s satisfaction only by being in *spiritual contact* with Christ through living faith, i.e., through faith and love (being in the state of grace).
 - When we are in spiritual contact with Christ, we participate in his satisfaction. We merit in him and therefore satisfy with him.
 - **Redemptive Suffering:** Col 1:24: *I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church.*

IV. The Virtue of Penance in the Christian Life

- The virtue of penance enables us to relate to God penitentially, i.e., to be more and more converted toward him in grace.
 - Penitential acts remedy the wounds of sin by satisfying (making amends) for sin’s debts, thus intensifying our rejection of sin and our friendship with God by grace.
- The Three Key Aspects of the Virtue of Penance:
 1. Contrition: sorrow for one’s sins such that one rejects one’s past sins, desires to make recompense for them, and plans to avoid future sins and to ascend to God.
 2. Confession: confessing one’s sins *in order to* be restored to relation with God.
 3. Satisfaction: the actual making amends for one’s sins.

V. The Sacrament of Confession (Penance) as a Special Kind of Penance

- Sin and Punishment: all sin, by its very nature, has punishment attached to it.
 - Mortal sin, which separates us from God, receives an eternal punishment.
 - Venial sin dampens the divine life within us and receives a temporal punishment.
- Only the Sacrament of Confession, by the power Christ has given to the sacrament, restores us to grace and mercifully remits the eternal punishment due to mortal sin.
 - Remission of temporal punishment then depends on *how lovingly our will moves unto God* in our Confession and thereafter in our other acts of the virtue of penance.
- The Sacrament of Confession contains the three key aspects of the virtue of penance.

Further Resources:

- YouTube: *Dominican Friars*, Fr. James Brent, O.P. on “Offer it Up”
- Podcast: *The Thomistic Institute*, “Why Lent? Innocence, Sin, Redemption | Fr. Gregory Pine”

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. Why is penance such a good thing? What penances might help me overcome certain sins?
2. How do satisfaction and penance help me to see the value of suffering in my conversion?