



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 3: Inside the Box: The Essential Dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession**

**Goal for tonight's session:** To grow in knowledge of the integral parts of the Sacrament of Confession and how the Sacrament causes (effects) the forgiveness of all sins (mortal and venial). We'll also review an examination of conscience structured according to the virtues of Christian life.

#### **I. Review: Penance, Confession, and the Christian Life**

- A National Eucharistic Revival entails a national sacramental revival.
- Sacrament: a sacred sign-action of Christ's Passion that causes the holiness it signifies.
  - We are saved through spiritual contact (living faith) with the Passion of Christ.
- We need to do penance because we need to be forgiven from and to satisfy (*satis-facere*, do-enough) or to atone (at-one-ment) for our sins.
  - Original sin → forgiven in Baptism.
  - Actual mortal sin → forgiven in Baptism and, after Baptism, in Confession.
  - Actual venial sin → forgiven in Baptism and, after Baptism, by any meritorious act.
    - Grace is the principle of merit. If we have destroyed the life of grace in ourselves, we cannot merit. Confession restores grace and so re-enables merit.
- Punishment for sin: restores justice with God, deters us from committing future sins, and heals and purifies us of the internal disorder caused by sin.
- All acts of penance have three key aspects: contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

#### **II. The Sacrament of Confession: Background**

- Christ institutes the sacrament after his Resurrection: John 20:19-23.
  - The authority of the "Keys of the Kingdom" is given to Peter in Matt 16:13-20.
- Recall: all sacraments signify and derive their power from the Passion of Christ.
  - The good thief's repentance at the Passion signifies Confession (Luke 23:39-43).
- The Beauty and Difficulty of Confession
  - Beauty: God re-establishes friendship with us, well beyond what we are justly due.
    - Unlike in human affairs, God's forgiveness *causes* our interior repentance.
  - Difficulty: We must face the hard truth about ourselves, which is always humbling.

### III. The Sacrament of Confession: Causes and Effects

- Cause: the contrition, confession, and satisfaction of the penitent (the matter), and the priest's absolution (the form).
  - Contrition: A penitent brings at least imperfect contrition for his sins (i.e., a sorrow for their wrongness). The grace of the sacrament perfects imperfect contrition.
    - Imperfect contrition includes a will to make restitution (esp. financial) for sins against justice and to change one's behavior (esp. in sins against temperance).
  - Confession: A penitent confesses all known mortal sins since last valid confession.
  - Satisfaction: A penitent resolves to complete the penance assigned by the priest.
  - The **Act of Contrition** ratifies one's contrition, confession, and satisfaction.
    - *Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because I fear the loss of heaven and the pains of hell but above all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all loving and deserving of all of my love. I firmly resolve, by the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.*
  - The Sacramental Form: The **Formula of Absolution** said by the priest:
    - *God, the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and poured out the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God grant you pardon and peace, and **I ABSOLVE YOU FROM YOUR SINS IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, + AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.***
- Effect I: perfect contrition (sorrow) for all one's past sins, especially those just confessed.
  - This penitential sorrow helps us to avoid future sins, especially those just confessed.
- Effect II: the forgiveness of all sins, even those legitimately forgotten, through the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul. This grace is what properly reconciles us to God, thus healing and elevating us, especially in the areas just confessed.

### IV. The Examination of Conscience and Tips for Making a Good Confession

- The goal of the Christian life is loving union with God. The examination of conscience, then, is not merely about meeting up to a checklist but, even more, about identifying areas in your life where you do not yet love God as he is calling you to love him.
- *It is good to go to confession at least once a month, and immediately after a mortal sin.*
- The best way to make a good confession is to come prepared, i.e., to have made a thorough examination of conscience and to be aware of the grave sins to be confessed.
- Be specific without unnecessary detail: the particular kind of sin and the number of times committed suffice. Give context only if it is necessary to understand what the sin was.
- Trust the priest! He is a minister of God; it is his responsibility and joy to reconcile you.

#### Further Resources:

- YouTube: *FOCUS Catholic*, "How To Have A Great Confession | Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P."
- YouTube: *The Thomistic Institute*, "Penance and Anointing (Aquinas 101)"
- Podcast: *Godsplaining*, "Episode 103: Mortal or Venial Sin?"

#### Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. Do I like the Sacrament of Confession? How has studying and contemplating the essential dynamics of Confession helped me to see more clearly the sacrament's beauty and power?
2. Where specifically can I improve as a penitent? How can I leverage the grace of the Sacrament of Confession to be sorrier for my sins and so to grow enduringly in virtue?