



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 4: Raised to Eternal Life: Confession, Communion, and the Kingdom of Heaven**

**Goal for tonight's session:** To grow in knowledge of how frequent Confession helps us: 1) to grow in charity; 2) to participate more deeply in the Sacrifice of the Mass; 3) to receive Communion more devoutly. We will also have ample time for Q&A.

#### **I. Overarching Review: The Sacraments, Penance, and the Dynamics of Confession**

- 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.
- By the virtue of penance, we reject sin, ask God for forgiveness for our sins, and, united to Christ by grace, satisfy (*satis-facere*, do-enough) for our sins through penitential works.
  - The Sacrament of Confession is the most powerful and important penitential work.
- The structure of the Sacrament of Confession:
  - Cause: → Matter (from penitent): contrition, integral confession, and satisfaction.  
→ Form (from priest): the absolution formula.
  - Effect I: perfect contrition (sorrow) for all one's past sins, especially those just confessed, and strength for the future battle against sin.
  - Effect II: the forgiveness of all sins, even those legitimately forgotten, through the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul. This grace properly reconciles us to God and so removes eternal punishment. It also heals and elevates us, especially in the areas just confessed.

#### **II. Confession, Cooperative Grace, and Growth in Charity**

- All sacraments cause grace *ex opere operato* ("by the work having been worked").
  - This is operative grace—what God does in us without us.
- Every human act also has a cooperative element—what God does in us with us.
  - Cooperative grace is caused *ex opere operantis* ("by the work of the one working").
  - In the sacraments, then, we have both *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* in play.
- In Confession, the operating grace (*ex opere operantis*) always brings about Effects I and II.
  - Our cooperation (*ex opere operantis*) in the sacrament, through our contrition, confession, and satisfaction, qualifies how intensely we receive Effects I and II.

- The more preparedly and penitentially one approaches the Sacrament of Confession, the more deeply grace of the sacrament penetrates the soul.
  - In turn, charity increases, the will draws closer to God, and temporal punishment is further satisfied.
- The grace of Confession conforms us to Christ’s spirit of expiation through suffering, which can and should extend throughout every aspect of our lives.
  - We thus become more patient and more loving in our own sufferings.

### III. Confession and the Sacrifice of the Mass

- The Sacrifice of the Mass is the re-presentation of Christ’s saving sacrifice on Calvary.
  - It is the re-presentation of the sacrifice because the Christ who sacrificed himself is made substantially present. At Mass, the Eucharistic Christ is offered to the Father.
  - The Mass has four essential sacrificial ends: praise, thanksgiving, petition, and propitiation. But propitiation (i.e., penitential satisfaction, atonement, expiation) is most central, since the Cross was God’s choice means of propitiating for our sins.
- The Sacrament of Penance, by Effects I and II, infuses (in the case of mortal sin) or increases (in the case of venial sin) within us a graced, penitential spirit of propitiation.
  - It therefore restores or deepens our capacity to participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass and to live a more propitiatory, “satisfactory” life in union with Christ.

### IV. The Eucharist, Frequent Confession, and Holier Reception of Holy Communion

- The structure of the Sacrament of the Eucharist:
  - Cause: → Matter: wheaten bread and grape wine.  
→ Form: Christ’s words of institution spoken by the priest over the matter.
  - Effect I: the real, substantial presence of Jesus Christ (Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity).
  - Effect II: union with Jesus Christ in the soul; increase of charity & spiritual vitality; intensification of unity in the Mystical Body (the Church); forgiveness of venial sins.
- The frequent confession of venial sins (2–4 times per month) helps us to heal from the after-effects of sin and to be sorrier for our sins, thus better avoiding them in the future.
  - With each Confession, our battle against sin is newly sanctified and fortified. We are thereby prepared to receive Communion more gratefully, devoutly, and lovingly.
- The Loop of Sacramental Grace:
  - Holy Communion intensifies our charity, which moves us to cooperate more perfectly in our participation in Confession, which in turn moves us to cooperate more perfectly in our reception of Communion.
  - Further up, further in... unto the Kingdom of Heaven!

#### Further Resources (see also Session 3 handout):

- YouTube: *Ascension Presents*, “Confessing the Same Sins Over and Over Again”
- Podcast: *Godsplaining*, “Episode 203: Why Not to Receive Holy Communion”
- Podcast: *Godsplaining*, Bonus Episodes 048–053: “The Holy Eucharist”

#### Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. How has the Sacrament of Confession strengthened me to overcome certain sinful habits in my life? How can I better prepare myself to bring more to the sacrament, *ex opere operantis*?
2. How can my own Confessions deepen my participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass? Intensify my reception of Communion? Improve my capacity to suffer for and with Christ?
3. How has this series helped me to know and love God more deeply? What will I do about it?