

SEVENTEEN REASONS TO RECEIVE GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN SACRAMENT

1. **GRACE:** In Sacrament we receive special help from God to live better lives and to keep ourselves free from sin.
2. **COUNSEL:** The priest receives special insights from the Holy Spirit to advise and guide us.
3. **WORD:** Jesus said so. It was his idea. Christ alive in His Church and his Bible planned it this way.
4. **SIGN:** All Sacraments are signs that mark an invisible happening with God in a visible way. God in his wisdom gives us a sign by which we can know his forgiveness. It's an outward sign that something did indeed happen. In this sense it's related to a protestant altar call such as we see in a Billy Graham crusade. For many people, spiritual confession directly to God doesn't seem very real and they don't feel very forgiven or relieved from guilt. We all need physical signs to relate to spiritual reality. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is such a sign.
5. **PSYCHOLOGY:** Jesus understands how the human mind works. Most of us are helped by bringing our problems out in the open with someone. Confession to a trained priest is a psychologically sound practice. It is a reality therapy and a release from guilt feelings. Confession helps us face the reality of our sinful condition in the light of God's love and mercy.
6. **CELEBRATION:** All Sacraments celebrate a relationship with God. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God, our Father, has arranged for a celebration, like the father in the story of the prodigal son. God wants a party like this for us. Reconciliation is a sacramental celebration that marks a new level in our relationship.
7. **TRADITION:** Going to confession is part of being Catholic. The long experience of the Church teaches forms of reconciliation that meet our spiritual and natural needs.
8. **COMMUNITY:** All sin hurts others. All sin weakens the whole People of God through which Jesus is alive. We need forgiveness from a representative of the people of God. The priest as the special representative of the community of believers, ministers forgiveness. Sin by us members also weakens the effectiveness of our church. In the ancient church, confession was often made to the whole congregation, and absolution was pronounced by the bishop. Today, for practical reasons and privacy, both the hearing of confessions and the absolution are delegated to the priest.
9. **INCARNATION:** The risen Christ almost always chooses to act and be alive among us through other people. The risen Jesus is Flesh this way. He is not a ghost. According to Scripture, God instituted His church and gave it the power to forgive sins. As church we delegate our priests to be the focal point of this power. For His own reasons, God almost always chooses to work through people, imperfect as all of us may be. He always has worked that way. Jesus is alive that way.
10. **ORDINATION:** While we are all equal in the sight of God, He assigns each of us special functions in his plan. The priest, by a call to his vocation, has been set aside for certain special functions. One of these is to minister God's healing forgiveness.
11. **NORMAL:** Sacrament is the normal and preferred way God forgives, but not the only way. When Sacramental Reconciliation is not available, we can be forgiven by God, even of mortal sin, if we are truly sorry. In this case we should still celebrate our forgiveness sacramentally when it becomes available and before receiving communion if mortal sin is involved.
12. **WHOLENESS:** Just as our sins involve both our physical self, our mind, our spirit, and other people, so our reconciliation with God should involve all of us too. It should not be just spiritual, but be expressed in an outward action, shared with someone. The Sacrament of Reconciliation provides for this need.
13. **UNITY:** Sacramental Reconciliation after serious sin is part of Church discipline. It is determined necessary before sharing in Sacramental Eucharist.
14. **EXAMINATION:** The examination of conscience that goes with sacramental confession helps us get a more realistic view of our lifestyle and direction.
15. **ASSURANCE:** Experience shows that they who say they can confess better directly to God seldom get around to it, or are very vague about it. Furthermore, if and when it is done they are not very sure anything happened.
16. **GIFTEDNESS:** We all have gifts of service from the Holy Spirit for the whole church. The priest is gifted for the ministry of God's forgiveness. A secular psychiatrist can't do what a priest is gifted to do. Neither can you by yourself.
17. **BIBLE:** The Bible tells us to confess our sins to one another. The priest is the focal point and delegate of this power. The Catholic practice of sacramental forgiveness is clearly scriptural. Js.5:16a, Jn.20:22-23, Mt.18:18, Act 19:18, Num.5:6-7a, and many other Bible passages support this.