

***Must I ever go to confession if I never have big sins?***

If you haven't been to confession in years you very likely have one serious sin right there. Sacramental forgiveness of sins is Jesus' idea. It's a sin of arrogance to tell Jesus we have a better idea. It's also a sin against the precepts of the Church to avoid the gift of sacramental Reconciliation.

Throughout salvation history God has always acted mainly through His chosen priests, prophets and leaders of His people. Jesus in the Gospels says "What you, Peter, decide here on earth will be validated in heaven." "Whose sins you forgive, are forgiven. Those you don't aren't." (Mt. 16:19, Jn. 20:23)

The ministry of Jesus continued in His apostles. The ministry of the apostles continues to this day in the apostolic succession that comes down through history from one bishop to the next. Our bishops are the successors of the apostles. Catholic priests share in the power of their bishops who succeed the apostles.

We see in the Old Testament how Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and all God's representatives had successors. So did King David and the Temple High Priests. The authority of Jesus was present already in the Old Testament. It comes down today through the bishops and to their priests in the sacrament of Holy orders. Jesus, risen and alive, provides us with visible and outward forgiveness of sins. We need to recognize this power in parish priests. In them we meet our living Jesus.

All sin is harmful to us and people around us. No sin is just our own business. Sin weakens our society. Sin weakens our Church. Serious sin can often be deadly (mortal). It can cut us off from the life of God (Grace). To go to Holy Communion with possible mortal sin is an even bigger sin (sacrilege). (1 Cor. 11:27) Mortal sin puts our very salvation in jeopardy. But even with venial sins, would we really want to stand naked before God's Judgment in front of our ancestors and all the saints. Would we tell God we like our own idea about sin and forgiveness better than His?

All of us have sins. Catholics are recovering sinners. Confession helps us recover. Even the Pope goes to confession. Sacramental Confession is such a comforting joy. Why would anyone avoid it? If you fear you forgot how to go, come anyway. Father will be glad to help you. Try it. You'll like it.