



Let's go over a few objections to the Sacrament of Penance and try to answer them.

1. Confession is difficult and humiliating.

What if it is? Unforgiven sin is also difficult, humiliating, - and dangerous. The incidental shame in confessing sin is part of our repentance, and it is negligible in comparison to the essential evil of sin. If a person finds Confession difficult he can offer his humiliation to God as a part of his atonement.

However, the difficulty of confessing sins is exaggerated. Every day in offices, stores, night clubs, and factories people confide their moral failures to other people in a far more detailed manner than that required by Confession. Confession answers a deep-seated need in human nature. People need to share their worries and troubles and secrets with others. This is especially true of sin, which many times weigh heavily on a person's conscience. The act of confessing guilt carries its own relief; this is an elementary fact of psychology. Is Confession so really difficult? Is not the difficulty and humiliation greatly exaggerated? Is it not better to confess our sin's to a duly appointed representative of Christ and to receive pardon, than to carry them about with us as unforgiven and ugly secrets which disturb our consciences?

2. Confession is psychologically harmful.

Absolutely false. The act of confessing is completely beneficial. Psychiatry makes extensive use of the technique of confessing. Psychiatry, with its technique of exploring the moral backgrounds of a person's life kind of makes me smile because these techniques have been used by the Church for centuries. Penance is a Sacrament which his endowed with the power and grace of Christ.

3. Why should I confess my sins to another man?

Catholics are willing to confess their sins to a priest – another man, it is true – because they know that Christ gave priests the power to forgive sins. Christ made Penance the ordinary means of removing sin. The priest in the confessional is a representative of Christ, and he is in the confessional because Christ placed him there – not because of his own preferences. When Catholics approach the confessional, they seek to benefit from the priestly power which the confessor possesses from Christ in virtue of is sacred office. They are aware he is entirely human, but they are not interested in his humanity. They are interested in the power which he has from Christ to absolve from sin through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. No Pope or any priest invented Confession. Confession, which is a part of the Sacrament of Penance, is the invention of Christ! In hearing Confessions the priest is performing a sacred Christ-given duty which is of immense value to human souls. He performs this duty gladly despite the physical inconveniences because he realizes that he is administering one of the great Sacraments of Christ.

4. The priest is as human as any other person. How can he forgive sins?

Yes, the priest is human. He is subject to the frailties and short-comings of human nature. However, this is not the point. His power to forgive sins does not come from his human nature. It comes from the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The confessor's power is derived from Christ, not from his own resources. He can only use this power for others, but he cannot use it for himself He cannot absolve himself He, too, is liable to sin. In seeking forgiveness he must go to another priest for absolution. Priests go to confession just like the laity. If one is in mortal sin, then a person must go to Confession first before receiving the Sacrament of Penance.