



God forgives our sins in the way He has chosen to do so.

And if our Lord Jesus Christ gave His Apostles the power to forgive sins, we believe it wholeheartedly because we trust in the Truth that dwells in our Church.

We know that Jesus Christ brought holy life to earth. This holy life is bestowed upon men through the Church and the Sacraments.



Confession is the sacrament of penance. It is instituted to free us from all the filth of sin.

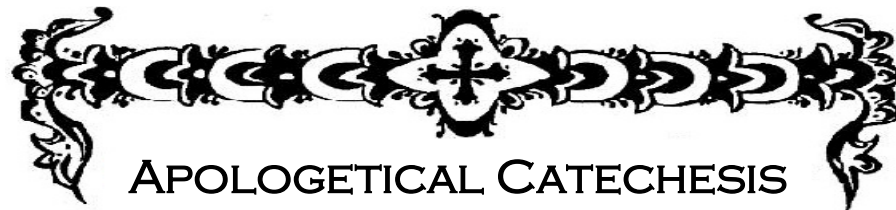
Confession is not only a custom, which is fulfilled automatically, it is a very important and indispensable means of correction, and it responds to the demands of our moral nature.

To avoid confession is the same as having a disease, and, knowing the sure remedy for it, not to use it out of carelessness or laziness, and thus make that disease worse.

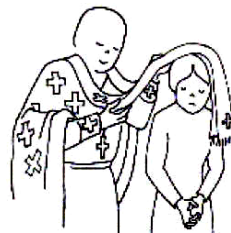
Priests are only intermediaries in the administration of the sacrament, which is invisibly accomplished, through them, by God himself.

St. John Chrysostom, referring to the Divine gift of the power of the pastors of the Church, of the power to "bind and loose," says: *"The priests determine here below (on earth), God confirms above (in Heaven) and the Lord agrees with the choice of his servants."*

The priest appears here as an instrument of Divine Grace and ***absolves sins not in His name, but in the Name of God.***



DO I NEED TO GO TO CONFESSION WITH A PRIEST?



Non-orthodox Christians teach that "confession must be rejected by all Christians, because it is merely a human invention and was not instituted by God."

The Orthodox Church, which is the Body of Christ, teaches that *"Confession is the Sacrament through which our sins are forgiven and our relationship with God and with each other is restored and strengthened. Through the Sacrament, Christ our Lord continues to heal those damaged in spirit and restore the Father's love to those who are lost. According to Orthodox teaching, the penitent confesses to God and is forgiven by God. The priest is the sacramental witness who represents both Christ and His people."*

What is the foundation of this teaching?

Let us see what the Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church say.

The non-Orthodox tell us that the Prophet David confessed only to God... And that was their only alternative! ... for Christ had not yet come.

Our situation is different.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the Apostles, *"Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."* (John 20:22-23). Christ gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins or to retain them, after which they received the Holy Spirit. If the Apostles withheld or did not absolve a person's sins, he died in his sins.



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Therefore, unless sins **were confessed to them**, the Apostles could not know which sins to absolve.

We all know that people came to Jesus to be healed of their diseases. Christ said to the paralytic, "*Man, your sins are forgiven*" (Luke 5:17-26). But if people had not come to Him, would their sins have been forgiven? No!

We have seen that according to John 20:22-23, the Apostles were given the power to forgive sins. If, out of stubbornness or pride, we did not approach them to receive that absolution, we would be like a sick man who did not want to approach Jesus out of pride to be healed.

We would be defying Christ.

Did anyone confess to the Apostles? Look at the Scriptures: "*Many of those who had believed came to confess and declare their practices*" (Acts 19:18).

Some think that this right or power to forgive sins was given to all disciples and not just to the Apostles. We are told that the word disciples includes all followers of Jesus, even the women who followed him. But if we look at



John 20:19-29, **we can see that it refers only to the Apostles.**

Those who dispute these verses **do so because the issue endangers the very existence of their "churches."**

Whether praying to God directly for forgiveness is enough for sins to be absolved or forgiven. Why did Jesus give the Apostles the power to forgive or withhold sins?

Why didn't He simply say, "Pray to the Lord that you may be forgiven"? But we have seen that the

Lord gave that power to His Apostles, and He gave it to them to the end of the age. Christ and the Apostles knew that they would not live until the Second Coming. What does this mean? That the Apostles and their successors would have the power to forgive sins. That is why the Apostles or-



daind priests in every city. And in order for his successors to be able to forgive people's sins, they must first confess them.

We find in Tradition this same teaching:

"In the gathering of the faithful you shall confess your sins and shall not approach prayer with a bad conscience" (Didache).



"I exhort you, dearest brethren, that each one confesses his sin, while the one who has sinned still lives in this world, that is, while his confession can be accepted, while the satisfaction and forgiveness granted by the priests are still pleasing to God" (De lapsis 28; Epist. 16:2).

"Priests have the power not only to forgive sins when they regenerate us by baptism, but also those who eat after our regeneration" (St. John Chrysostom, De Sacerdotio 3:6).

"Be attentive to those who must confess your sin. Above all, seek that the physician to whom you must explain the causes of your illness should be compassionate to the one who is sick and weep with the one who weeps..." (Origen, Hom. In pp. 37).

St. Ambrose tells us the following:

"We receive the Holy Spirit who... he made us his priests to forgive the sins of others" (Exp. In ps. 118).

With regard to those who say that it is enough to confess one's sins to God without the need of the Church, the blessed Augustine tells us: "*Let no one say to himself, I confess myself to God in private; I do it before God. Is it then in vain that Christ has said, 'Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'? Is it in vain that the keys of the Kingdom have been given to the Church? Do we make the Gospel invalid, the words of Christ invalid?*"

Orthodox Christians accept both what Sacred Scripture says and what is transmitted by the Holy Tradition of the Fathers of the Church.

