



Participating in the Sacrament

When teenagers participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they come face to face with the mystery of God's love. This sacrament helps them experience God's forgiveness firsthand. Hopefully, they will come to experience Jesus' "look of love."

How is this love of God manifested?

1. Teenagers experience the freedom that comes from bringing their sin into the light of Christ (cf. Jn 3: 20-21). Everything inside a young person can cry out: "I don't want to go to confession!" This struggle is not unique to teenagers; it is common to everyone who has endeavored to bring his sin to the light. To speak openly about our sin grates on our fallen nature.

Nonetheless, the Sacrament of Reconciliation enables all of us (including teenagers) to come safely into the light of Christ's truth and experience his forgiveness. For young people, it is the opportunity to experience freedom from nagging guilt and embarrassment. They are surely blessed by the cleansing of the Holy Spirit leading to an inner sense of peace. Hopefully, they will know the reality of St. John's words: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin... If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:7-9).

2. The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps young adults to grasp that they are responsible for their lives, for how they think and act. They are obliged to examine how their words and actions have hurt and offended others, and how their lives do or do not reflect God's standards. This sacrament forces them to see that they are

not isolated individuals but members of the body of Christ and the human family. Their sin injures that body and violates the integrity of others. The Sacrament of Reconciliation accentuates the communal nature of our sinfulness and reconciliation.

3. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit, empowering young people to live holy lives. John's words to young people can become a reality. He exhorted them: "I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one... I write to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 Jn 2:13-14). Through the actions of Jesus, by the power of his Spirit, young men and women can conquer sin in their lives. Jesus breaks the hold Satan has gained over them through the lust of their eyes and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn 2:16). We should not underestimate the spiritual effect that regular participation in this sacrament can have on teenagers.
4. By participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, young people implicitly, if not explicitly, recommit their lives to the Gospel. The teenager is saying, "I want to turn away from sin. I want to strive once more to live by God's commands, I want to live under his authority. I desire the power and life of Jesus' Holy Spirit to be active in my life." Obviously, young people,

like all of us, may fail and sin again; nevertheless, rededications is essential for spiritual growth. Jesus is pleased when we renew our commitment to him and to his Gospel.

An Examination of Conscience for Young Adults

Responsibilities to God:

- Have I gone to Mass on Sunday or have I rebelled and been stubborn about going to Mass? Did I participate in the Mass or did I daydream?
- Have I prayed every day?
- Have I read the Bible?
- Have I been rebellious toward God and his commands?
- Have I misused the name of God by swearing and cursing?
- Have I told the Father that I love him for creating me and making me his son/daughter?
- Have I thanked Jesus for becoming man, dying for my sin and rising to give me eternal life?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me conquer sin and temptation and to be obedient to God's commands?

Responsibilities to others and myself:

- Have I been rebellious, disobedient or disrespectful to my parents, teachers and those in authority over me?
- Have I lied to or deceived my parents or others?
- Have I been arrogant and stubborn?
- Have I talked back to my parents or those in authority?
- Have I gotten angry or nurtured and held grudges and resentments?

- Have I refused to forgive others?
- Have I cultivated hatred?
- Have I engaged in sexual fantasies?
- Have I looked at others lustfully?
- Have I read pornographic literature or looked at pornographic pictures, shows or movies?
- Have I masturbated?
- Have I lustfully kissed or sexually touched someone?
- Have I had sexual intercourse?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have one?
- Have I gossiped about others?
- Have I slandered anyone?
- Have I told lies about others?
- Have I mocked or made fun of others?
- Have I lied or cheated?
- Have I stolen anything? Have I paid it back?
- Have I been selfish or spiteful toward others?
- Have I been jealous?
- Have I gotten drunk, or taken drugs?
- Have I participated in anything that is of the occult: ouija boards, fortune tellers, séances, channeling, astrology?
- Have I been patient, kind gentle and self-controlled?
- When my conscience told me to do something good, did I do it or did I ignore it?

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