

Did you know . . .

The Five C's of Forgiveness

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the most unique and beautiful aspects of Catholicism. Our Lord, in his abundant love and mercy, provided for this sacrament so that we can obtain forgiveness for our sins and reconcile with God and Church. It “washes us clean.”

The Forgiveness Book-A Catholic Approach, calls the 5 stages of forgiveness as celebrated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation the “5 C’s.”

- **Conviction: I have done wrong.** People may offend others through malicious words or actions, put down people or failure to speak or act leaving wrongs uncorrected. And we must “convict” ourselves without making excuses for what we have done.
- **Confession: I reveal my offense.** The first step toward forgiveness is accepting we have done wrong. Then, we must say it aloud to someone else. “Public acknowledgement of a promise binds us all to uphold the pledge. As long as the wrongs they do remain in the dark, they cannot be healed by the light of God’s love!”
- **Contrition: I express sorrow.** People need to express sorrow for what they have done. Being naturally good as God made them, people feel badly for their wrong words/actions. They need to say from their hearts that they are sorry. Contrition lays bare the heart and is an invitation to love.
- **Compensation: I fix what I broke.** People need to do something good to make up for their offense, showing affection in tangible ways. In terms of sacramental forgiveness, nothing we do makes us worthy to be forgiven. God forgives us because we need to be forgiven; our need is the only qualification He is looking for.
- **Correction: I resolve for the future.** People need to resolve to amend their lives with a serious effort not to repeat their offenses. In our Act of Contrition, they firmly resolve “to sin no more”...not on their own...but “with the help of Thy Grace.”

The call to forgiveness is a decision we make every day in forgiving and in being forgiven. Forgiveness is there from God; it is “a matter of whether we show up to claim it.”

[Next week: Learning To Forgive Through The Saints]

Judy Pearson

