

THE SACRAMENTS IN SCRIPTURE: CONFESSION AND ANOINTING OF THE SICK

“All the invisible realities of our redemption become visible in the sacraments.”

—Pope Leo the Great

Confession

1. Matthew 9:1-8. *And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” Then some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” And he stood up and went to his home. When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.*

- See also **Luke 5:17-26**. We need to establish this right away: **only God has the authority to forgive sins**. No one else can claim to do this, and this is important for us because on the very first Easter Sunday...

2. John 20:19-23. *When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Received the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

- Obviously (I hope), the priest is not divine. Yet he claims to do what only God has the authority to do! How? When he is hearing confessions, the priest is acting *in persona Christi capitis* – “in the person of Christ the Head.” Remember: **the sacraments are always the work of Jesus Christ**.

3. Isaiah 43:25. *I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

- St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, St. Claude de la Columbiere, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

4. Psalm 103:8-14.

The LORD is merciful and gracious,

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse,

nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins,

nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,

so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

as far as the east is from the west,

*so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.
For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.*

- "As far as the east is from the west..." How far is that? Pretty far, I think. I love this psalm. If you ever find yourself doubting Jesus Christ's mercy or his willingness to forgive you, read this psalm and remind yourself that God gave us Psalm 103 *before* He died on the Cross to prove how much he loved us.

5. Psalm 51.

- Just read it. Just read it. And pray it. As often as you need to, **pray this psalm**. King David wrote it after murdering his friend Uriah the Hittite in order to hide his adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife.

Anointing of the Sick

1. Matthew 9:20-22. *Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.*

- Remember that other story from Matthew 9? We're actually going to revisit the same story again in a moment, for a different reason this time, but look at this other story *in the same chapter*. Something that we are going to see is that these two sacraments go together: **HEALING** and **FORGIVENESS**.

- This is just one example of many where Jesus healed the sick. Under the Old Covenant, physical health was tied to one's ability to participate in worshipping God – or put differently, you were not considered a full member of the community if you were sick/impaired/deformed/etc., and consequently, you were excluded from the fullness of communal worship.

2. Matthew 9:1-8. / Luke 5:17-26.

- Look at what Jesus says to the young man initially. "Your sins are forgiven." Really? I'm crippled, my friends had to carry me here, and you're telling me my *sins* are forgiven? Where did you get the idea that *that* is why I'm here? If we think about it, Christ's first words are bizarre.

- This goes back to what the sacrament is really for, what it gives us: the healing that we *need*, not necessarily the healing that we *want*. The other grace we receive in this sacrament is the ability to carry our crosses well: notice that initially it does not appear that Jesus intended to heal the man.

3. James 5:13-16. *Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*

- This is where the substance (remember **form** and **substance**) of the sacrament comes from.

- Notice again the close ties between this sacrament and... the forgiveness of sins.