

The Sacrament of Penance — Detox for the Soul

On several occasions Jesus asked St. Faustina to record what He said about the Sacrament of Penance, or Reconciliation, and the reasons why He wants us to come to Confession. To understand the importance of this we must first understand what sin is and how it affects us.

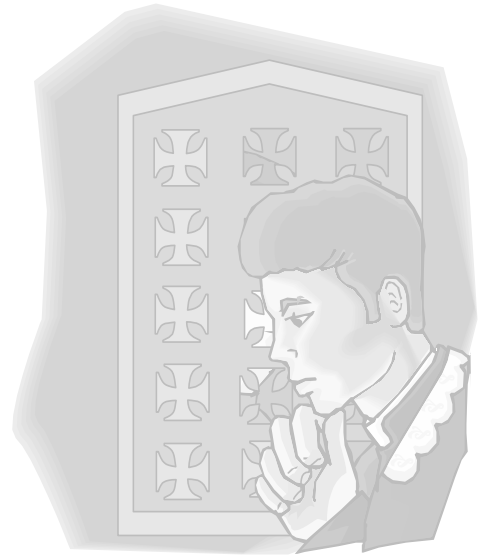
Let's look at it like this. What happens if our body has been exposed to toxins or poisoned? We become sick and may suffer serious illness or even face death. Even with good nourishment we cannot become truly healthy until the poison or toxins have been removed from the body.

Well sin works like poison. Sins are toxins that will eventually make us very sick and our lives miserable, not to mention the lives of others. We cannot receive the full benefit of the nourishment we receive in Holy Communion until the toxins, or sins, are first removed. In a sense we need to “detox,” and the best place to do this is in the Sacrament of Penance.

Jesus utilized humble St. Faustina to make this clear to us today. She records these words of Jesus in *Diary* entry 1602: **Every time you go to confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul.** Christ's grace upon our soul is what washes away the toxins. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9). This is accomplished *through the action of the priest* in Confession. Paragraph 1461 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, [priests] have the power to forgive all sins, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus encourages us through St. Faustina: **Come with faith to the feet of my representative** (*Diary*, 1448). **When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest but I Myself act in your soul** (*Diary*, 1602).



Jesus tells us that He is the one who acts in our souls. He is the one who offers us a detoxification regime and He reminds us of this through The Divine Mercy Image. The pale ray coming from the heart of Jesus helps us to recall the water that pour forth from His side at the Crucifixion. It symbolizes the cleansing we receive through the Holy Spirit at Baptism, but also in a continual way through the Sacrament of Penance: **Here the misery of the soul meets the God of mercy** (1602). Our souls are washed clean and we are “detox'd” in the Sacrament of Reconciliation where Jesus told St. Faustina: **the greatest miracles take place** (1448).





If the Sacrament of Reconciliation is where Jesus says the “greatest miracles take place,” then could this be the reason the evil one works so hard to keep us from going to Confession? What kind of miracles take place here that makes this Sacrament so powerful?

Perhaps Diary passage 1725 can help us answer these questions: **Never analyze what sort of a priest it is that I am making use of; open your soul in Confession as you would to Me, and I will fill it with My light.** Again Jesus tells us that it is He whom we meet in the confessional. But He also reminds us here that He fills us with His light. This encounter with God not only has a cleansing affect (which is why we always feel so much better when we walk out of the confessional) but it also has a nourishing affect. By filling us with His light, Jesus empowers us with the grace we need not to sin, to overcome temptations, and avoid the situations that lead us to sin. Without sin, we grow in holiness and love of self and neighbor.

This is why the evil one wants to keep us from going to Confession. He wants us to continue to sin. He wants us to do things that will be hurtful and harmful to ourselves and to others. So, be on guard and don’t let him fool you or discourage you from going to Confession. Try to go on a regular basis, but especially when you have committed a serious or mortal sin. Cleanse your soul of the toxins that will keep you from good health and good cheer. And have no fear. Just remember these wonderfully consoling words of Jesus and thank St. Faustina for writing them down in her *Diary* for us: **Be not afraid of your Savior, O sinful soul . . . Be willing to talk openly with your God of mercy who wants to speak words of pardon and lavish His grace on you. How dear your soul is to me! I have inscribed your name upon My hand; you are engraved as a deep wound in My Heart** (1485).

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Complete the following sentences based on the information found in this article.

1. Sin works on the soul like _____ in the body.
2. The white ray on the Divine Mercy Image stands for the Sacraments of _____ and _____.
3. Jesus waits for us in the _____, He is only hidden by the _____.
4. _____ doesn’t want us to go to Confession.
5. In the Sacrament of Penance we are given _____ to overcome sinfulness.
6. The greatest _____ take place in the _____.
7. A priest can forgive sins by virtue of _____.



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Answer Key

Complete the following sentences based on the information you read above.

1. Sin works on the soul like poison in the body.
2. The white ray on the Divine Mercy Image stands for the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance or Reconciliation.
3. Jesus waits for us in the confessional, He is only hidden by the priest.
4. The evil one or Satan doesn't want us to go Confession.
5. In the Sacrament of Penance we are given grace to overcome sinfulness.
6. The greatest miracles take place in the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation.
7. A priest can forgive sins by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.