

APOLOGETICS MADE EASY

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Confession of Sins

A big question among Christians, even Catholics, is confessing our sins to a priest.

In the Old Testament, there is great emphasis on such things as guilt offerings, placing sins on the scapegoat, confessing wrongs and making amends with those who have been wronged.

Then, in the Gospel of John, after Jesus has risen from the dead, He appears to the disciples, breathes on them and says the following: “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” Just so you know, this is not just a Catholic translation of the Bible. The King James Bible says the same thing.

In the Letter of James 5:16 is this command: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” The Didache, which is the oldest non-scriptural document describing the functions of the early Christian community in about 60 A.D., contains these instructions: “In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience,” and “But every Lord’s day, gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”

The practice of confessing sins to a priest as the representative of Jesus is consistent with the notion in the Bible that a sinner must be reconciled not just with Jesus but with the Body of Christ on earth, the Church. For Christians, sin is never just a private matter between the individual and Jesus.