



## *Ten Reasons to Go to Confession*

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh

Penance, aka *confession*, is the sacrament of the forgiveness of sin. You can't beat it for convenience. It's available practically whenever. Tell a priest you want to go to confession and you'll get his attention. One bishop I know was cornered on an airplane. Another passenger figured out what was going on and asked if he could confess too. It must have been an interesting game of musical seats. An interesting question for priests might be: Where was the strangest place you ever administered the sacrament of penance? The answers I've gathered include "in a sports bar, at a graduation party" and "on the golf course, walking up the fairway."

Confession has many benefits. Here are ten:

1. **Confidentiality guaranteed.** There's nothing like confessing your sins to someone guaranteed not to tell anyone else. Sometimes you need to talk in absolute confidence. Even under subpoena, a priest can't tell anyone what is said to him in confession. He can't even hint at it. Now that's confidentiality.
2. **Housekeeping for the soul.** It feels good to be able to start a clean life all over again. Like going into a sparkling living room in your home, it's nice when clutter is removed; even if it's your own.
3. **A balm for the desire for revenge.** When you have been forgiven you can forgive others. If the perfect Jesus forgives me, who am I to want to avenge the slights in my life. (Think: "Why did they promote him over me?" or "Mom played favorites!")
4. **Low cost therapy.** It's free, which makes it cheaper than a psychiatrist for dealing with guilt.
5. **Forced time to think.** Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. To examine our lives and acknowledge failings marks the first step of making things right with God, others and ourselves. Life can be more worth living when you ponder the meaning of your own life.
6. **Contribution toward world peace.** *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, said that the imbalances in the world that lead to war and tensions "are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man." Peace of soul leads to peace of heart leads to peace beyond oneself.
7. **A better neighborhood.** Confession leaves you feeling good about yourself, thereby cutting back the inclination to road rage and aggressive shopping cart driving. With the grace of the sacrament you're energized to, as Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, "go and sin no more."
8. **Realistic self-perception.** Confession helps overcome arrogance when you have to admit you're as much of a sinner as anyone else. It helps build tolerance for others' perceived shortcomings.
9. **One more benefit of being Catholic.** There are lots of benefits, including a sense of community, liturgical rites to help us encounter God in prayer, and the wonderful sense of humanity exemplified in the saints, from Mary, the loving Mother of God, to Augustine, the exasperating son of Monica. The sacrament that leads us to inner peace is among the greatest boons.
10. **Closeness to God.** Confession helps you realize that you have a close connection to God and receive his grace through the sacraments. What can be better than knowing God's on your team, or, to be less arrogant about it, that you are on God's.