



# Archdiocesan Program

## WHY CATHOLIC?

STRENGTHENING FAITH ... MAKING DISCIPLES



## THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

### *I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS*

#### **Biblical Reflection: Jn 20:21-23**

The Apostle's Creed associates faith in the forgiveness of sin not only with faith in the Holy Spirit, but also with faith in the Church and in the communion of saints. It was when he gave the Holy Spirit to his apostles that the risen Christ conferred on them his own divine power to forgive sins: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Jn 20:22-23). (CCC 976)



Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sins: it unites us to Christ, who died and rose, and gives us the Holy Spirit. (CCC 985)

There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. "There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest." (*Roman Catechism* I, 11, 5) Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin (cf. Mt. 18:21-22). (CCC 982)

By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance (CCC 986)

St. John Chrysostom said, "Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels... God above confirms what priests do here below" (*De sac.* 3,5). St. Augustine also taught us that, "Where there no forgiveness of sins in the Church, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation. Let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift" (*Sermo* 213, 8) (CCC 983)

#### **Questions for discussion:**

- **The Church has always taught us that "there is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest". How do you feel or think about this teaching of the Church?**
- **Unfortunately, the sacrament of Penance or Confession is the sacrament least appreciated or received by many Catholics, why do you think this is so?**
- **Why do you think the Sacrament of Penance is necessary and it is not enough to "confess" our sins directly with God?**
- **One of the formulas used during the placing of the ashes at the beginning of Lent, is accompanied by the words, "Repent, and believe in the Gospel"; it's a call to conversion! What do you understand by "conversion"? If we are already believers in Christ, what do we have to convert from?**

**Further reading:** Catechism of the Catholic Church, numbers 976-987.