



Confession and Communion: The Intimate Connection

The late Pope Benedict XVI, a brilliant man, had a childlike spirit. We see it in a moving dialogue he had, in October of 2005, with children who had just made their first Holy Communion. He recalled his own, saying:

It was a lovely Sunday in March 1936. There were about 30 of us, boys and girls from my little village of no more than 500 inhabitants. At the heart of my joyful memories is this one: I understood that Jesus had entered my heart, he had actually visited me. And I realized that this is a gift of love that is truly worth more than all the other things that life can give. I promised the Lord as best I could: "I always want to stay with you," and I prayed to him, "but above all, stay with me."

One of the children then asked him: "Holy Father, do I have to go to confession every time I receive Communion, even when I committed the same sins? Because I realize that they are always the same."

Pope Benedict replied: "It is only necessary when you have committed a serious sin, when you have deeply offended Jesus, so that your friendship is destroyed and you have to start again. Only in that case, when you are in a state of 'mortal' sin – in other words, grave sin – is it necessary to go to confession before Communion." But what he said next was particularly beautiful:

Even if, as I said, it is not necessary to go to confession before each Communion, it is very helpful to confess with a certain regularity. It is true: our sins are always the same, but we clean our homes, our rooms, at least once a week, even if the dirt is always the same; in order to live in cleanliness, in order to start again. Otherwise, the dirt might not be seen but it builds up.

Something similar can be said about the soul, for me myself: if I never go to confession, my soul is neglected. This cleansing of the soul which Jesus gives us in the Sacrament of Confession helps us to make our consciences more alert, more open, and hence, it also helps us to mature spiritually and as human persons.

These simple words to a group of children apply equally to us. In our churches we see precious gold tabernacles accompanied always by lighted sanctuary candles. Together they tell us, "Jesus is here – this is a sacred place." When we are cleansed of our sins by regular confession, our souls are likewise made pure and radiant. Then when we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Communion, we become living tabernacles, with the fire of His Light and Love burning brightly within us.

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you make a habit of regular confession, at least once a month, realizing that it is not just for the forgiveness of mortal sins, but for growth in grace, strength and virtue?
2. Reflect on how you feel after making a good, heartfelt confession.

Ideas:

1. Consult a helpful guide to confession. The Knights of Columbus have an excellent one with examination of conscience: Visit kofc.org/en/resources/cis/devotionals/2075.pdf.
2. Pray the following prayer before confession: Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind that I may clearly see all my sins. Move my will to sincere sorrow, trusting in Your Divine Mercy. May this confession make me ever more worthy to be a living tabernacle for my Eucharistic Lord.

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