



“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

JOHN 20:23

The Definition of Confession

Confession means acknowledgment. It is the acknowledgment of our sins which we must make to a priest to obtain our pardon from God. To confess is to go to a priest, a minister of Jesus Christ, and acknowledge to him, in simplicity and repentance, all the sins we have had the misfortune to commit.

Those who never confess have the strangest and most absurd ideas of Confession. A Protestant lady, who had often come for advice to Msgr. Cheverus, Bishop of Boston, said to him one day that Confession appeared to her absurd. “Not quite so absurd as you think,” replied the saintly Bishop, smiling, “Without suspecting it, you have felt its value and necessity, and for a long time you have been confessing to me, since Confession is nothing more than confiding the troubles of conscience that you find so much relief in disclosing to me.” This good lady made no delay in confessing properly and becoming Catholic.

Again, nothing is more natural than Confession. Voltaire (a witness not to be suspected of pro-Catholic prejudice) acknowledged as much in one of his lucid moments. “There is perhaps no institution more useful,” he wrote. “Most men, when they fall into great faults, feel remorse. If there is anything on earth to console them, it is the means of being reconciled to God and themselves.” Then, when we confess, we unburden our conscience of the sins which dishonor it, and we find, in the Sacrament of Penance, peace of heart and joy of soul.

Taken from “Confession – A Little Book for the Reluctant” by Msgr. Louis Gaston de Segur