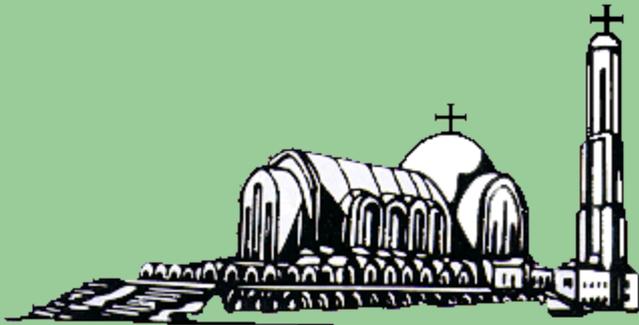




St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church
Pre-Service Training Seminars



Lecture 6:

*THE SACRAMENT OF
REPENTANCE &
CONFESSION*

**“For God is not the author of
confusion, but of peace”**
(1 Corinthians 14:33)



Overview of the Holy Sacraments

1. The Sacrament of Baptism
2. The Sacrament of Confirmation
3. The Sacrament of Eucharist
4. The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)
5. The Sacrament of Repentance & Confession
6. The Sacrament of the Unction of the Sick
7. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony





Sacrament of Repentance & Confession (Introduction)



- ❖ The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession is a holy sacrament, by which the sinner returns to God, confessing his sins before the priest to be absolved by the priest through the authority granted to him by God.
- ❖ By this absolution the confessing person is granted the forgiveness of those sins which he confessed.
- ❖ **Repentance** means a changing of the mind, of thoughts, attitudes, and feelings. Repentance is not a momentary matter. It is a way of life. It is a progressive state.
- ❖ **Confession** means that what a man has in his heart, he reveals to the representative of Christ, the Bishop or the Priest--whatever wrong he has done.



Sacrament of Repentance & Confession (Institution)

- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession when He said to His disciples, the pure apostles: *“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18).*
- ❖ Also, after the Resurrection the Lord said : *“As the Father sent me, I also send you.’ And when He said this He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them, if you retain the sins of any they are retained” (John 20:21-23).*





Sacrament of Repentance & Confession (Institution)

- ❖ By this He gave them the authority of binding sins or loosing them, through the authority given to them by the Holy Spirit, and according to the contriteness of the confessing person.





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From a humane perspective:

- Human beings by nature require comfort and wise counseling, and the need to speak to someone regarding problems or worries.
- They feel the need to have someone share their joys as well as their sorrows, and this is especially so when disclosing sensitive issues to a person who is a priest, a confession father, a teacher, or a guardian; one who keeps secrets, and has a nurturing nature.





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the Old Testament perspective:

- Confession was a necessary act for the repentance of a sinner who brought the sacrifice, laid his hand on its head and confessed his sins to God before the priest.
- The Lord said: *“If a person sins or touches any unclean thing ... or if a person swears ... he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned ..., so the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin”* (Levi.5:1-6). Hence, the sinner is obliged to confess all his trespasses.





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the Old Testament perspective:

- When David the King sinned and committed adultery and murder, the Lord sent Nathan to him.
- David confessed *“I have sinned against the Lord’, so Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has put away your sin, you shall not die’”* (2 Samuel 12).
- When David confessed to Nathan the prophet, he heard the declaration of putting away his sin and that he would not die the eternal death or perish because of it, but certain punishments were imposed on him, necessary for repentance.
- Solomon said: *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the New Testament perspective:

- John the Baptist preached repentance saying, *“Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand ... then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins”* (Matthew 3:1-6).
- The Lord Jesus Christ gave the authority to the Apostles and their successors by saying, *“Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 18:18)





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the New Testament perspective:

- After His resurrection, “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘As the Father sent me, I also send you. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’” (John 20:21,22)
- The book of Acts tells us that the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession was practiced during the days of the Apostles : *“And many who had believed came, confessing and telling their deeds”* (Acts 19:18).
- Our teacher St. James advises us: *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed”* (John5:16).





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the Church Fathers Perspective:

- St. Athanasius the Apostolic said, *“As the Baptized is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, by means of the priest, the repentant is granted forgiveness of his sins by the grace of Christ, also through the priest.”*
- St. Augustine said, “The Lord Jesus Christ rose Lazarus from the death and those around him (the apostles) loosed him from the grave clothes that bound him.” Was the Giver of life unable to loosen the grave clothes? By loosening them, the apostles denoted their authority of absolving and forgiving sins, which the Lord granted to them and their successors.





The Necessity of Confessing to a Priest

❖ From the Church Fathers Perspective:

- St. Gregory of Nyssa said : “Regard the church priest as a spiritual father for you, reveal to him your secrets openly, just as a patient reveals his hidden wounds to the physician, and so is healed.”
- It is mentioned in the Apostolic Orders, “You must honor your spiritual fathers as they are given the authority of life and death from God, to judge the sinners and punish them, or to absolve the repentants from their sins.”





Necessary Steps for an Acceptable Confession

1. True repentance because of our love for God not fear
2. To have honest intention and steadfast will
3. To examine our conscience and self carefully
4. To be truthful in confession
5. Not to hide any secrets and hidden thoughts
6. Not to find excuses for yourself
7. To confess bravely without embarrassment
8. A person must be fair with oneself
9. The confessor must adhere to the advice given
10. To practice all the spiritual exercises given





The Rite of Practicing the Sacrament

❖ Before Confession:

- The period in between Confession must not exceed one month or a month and a half maximum.
- Delaying confession encourages a person to be negligent, and forget many sins committed.
- Delaying confession is a great loss to a person and delays spiritual growth noticeably.
- Self-examination must be honest, and without condemning others, for in confession we should blame ourselves, not other people or circumstances.





The Rite of Practicing the Sacrament

❖ Before Confession:

- The confessing person must care for three important things while preparing for confession:
 - Sins and mistakes committed
 - Thoughts and feelings encountered which need counseling from the confession father in order to distinguish the good from the bad
 - Any questions regarding the spiritual life which need guidance or discussion with the confession father.





The Rite of Practicing the Sacrament

❖ During Confession:

- Confession must take place in a quiet corner in the Church, facing the altar, so that we feel empowered and sanctified.
- Confession, being a sacrament, should always take place in Church, however, if the priest comes across a person who has not been regular in church or in church life, but wishes to repent, the priest may visit them at home and accept their confession, and at the same time encourage them to come to Church.
- In addition, the Sacrament of Confession may take place at home if someone is sick, before they receive the Holy Communion.





The Rite of Practicing the Sacrament

❖ After Confession:

- After the person is done with his confessions, the person bows down his head or even kneel down to accept the absolution. The priest puts the cross over his head and prays the Absolutions...usually they are 3 absolutions...2 of them prayed secretly and the third one is prayed out loud.
- There are some prayers in the book of Agpeya that might be helpful for the confessing person, he may use them before and after the confession.





Conclusions

- ❖ Repentance and confession are not a trial or a court. It is a shelter for sinners, a hospital. The one who confesses is not judged or condemned. He is surrounded by love, comfort, sincere interest; he is taken care of, healed, assisted, treated by the physician, instructed, and forgiven.
- ❖ The priest is not a judge, he is a doctor, a loving father. He is an angel of freedom and forgiveness.
- ❖ When there is true repentance and confession, remission is granted. No sin is unforgivable except for the sin of unrepentance, which is, in essence, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In other words, the one who will remain unforgiven is the one who does not believe that God can forgive and save.

