

Didache Divine Service
Session 15—Confession

8:30, 2:30, and 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 22, 2023

1. **ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY**
2. **Catechetical Sermon on Confession and the Ash Wednesday Old Testament, Joel 2:12-19.**

CATECHISM—CONFESSION:

What is confession?

Confession has two parts.

First, that we confess our sins,

and second, that we receive absolution,

that is forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself,

not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

1. Confessing sin is not only a normal part of our lives as baptized Christians; it is at the center of our lives because we follow Jesus. He is the One who forgives our sin because of His death for us upon the cross.
2. Jesus' forgiveness strengthens our faith, reconciles us to God and to one another within the body of Christ, teaches us how to love God and those who have sinned against us, comforts our troubled consciences, and strengthens our hope in the resurrection when we will be completely free from sin and enjoy eternal life with Jesus.
3. Repentance is part of faith in Jesus; it means that we turn away from our sin, desire to be free of it, confess it, renounce it, pray for God's help to lead a holy life, and flee to Jesus for the strength and comfort that only His forgiveness can give (Christ's forgiveness is our salvation and the strength for living a holy life in God's Word).
4. There are many opportunities to confess our sin, because our faith in Christ depends upon Jesus' absolution (Confession in private prayer; corporate confession with the congregation; confession to a brother or sister in Christ, including a spouse, children, or parents; and confession to our pastor privately).

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of,

as we do in the Lord's Prayer;

but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

1. In confession before God in our prayers and with the congregation corporately, we plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of; this includes the confession of original sin, namely, that we are sinful, and that original sin has thoroughly corrupted our nature so that it is impossible for us to save ourselves. Out of this corruption all sinful thoughts, words, and deeds flow.
2. Private confession before the pastor is a gift from Jesus that rests upon His command to His ministers to preach the forgiveness of sins, and to forgive the sins of repentant Christians who are troubled by their sins. Think of it as an extension of the preaching of the Gospel.
3. The phrase, "which we know and feel in our hearts" describes how sin becomes "known" and "felt" in our consciences and hearts by God's Law, the accusations of Satan, and when we offend against the will of the new man.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments:

Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker?

Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy?

Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome?

Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds?

Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

1. God's Law, the Ten Commandments, is the ultimate objective judge of what is sin before God. What we "know and feel in our hearts" must be judged on the basis of God's Word, rather than our feelings. A "troubled conscience" has value in so far as it is the response of God's Law and/or the reaction of the new man of faith who sincerely desires to love God and his neighbor but has failed to do so.
2. It is important to learn to understand sin on the basis of our station in life and the responsibilities God gives us in marriage, family, and our daily work. This is where faith in Jesus is lived out.
3. The corruption of sin shows itself in the very "ordinary" failings of human life (disobedience, laziness, being hot tempered, hurtful in our words, neglect of responsibilities, etc.)

Ash Wednesday Old Testament Reading: Joel 2:12-19

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." ¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him—A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? ¹⁵ Blow the ^[f]trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly;

¹⁶ Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. ¹⁷ Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should ^[e]rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" ¹⁸ Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. ¹⁹ The LORD will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.

Lent is the season of intense renewal in the baptismal life of contrition and repentance. By God's Word the trumpet blows in the congregation, calling us to fasting, weeping, and mourning over our sin. The invitation goes out daily, "turn to Me with all your heart!" "Rip open your heart..." says the Lord. "Return to Me..." says the Lord, "I am gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Because of His death for you and for His congregation, God relents from doing harm. The punishment that we deserved fell upon Jesus and the blessing of eternal forgiveness from the Lord is His gift. Do not turn away from Him! "Come unto me all you who labor with sin and are heavy laden," says the Lord, "and I will give you rest"—the rest of sins forgiven, the rest of divine peace, the rest of a conscience free from guilt. "I am your treasure, your righteousness, your sanctification, and your redemption" says the Lord. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Every week this Lent, as we meditate upon the St. Matthew Passion, we shall "gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes," and together with our priests, we shall "weep between the porch and the altar, saying to the Lord, "Spare Your people, O Lord." And He WILL—for Jesus' sake a broken and a contrite heart He will never despise." Let Christ's forgiveness be our life!