



As Catholics, we are required to go to Confession once a year, but why stop there? We know Confession can be daunting or difficult, and there might be many reasons why you don't want to go. However, regular Confession, whether it be monthly, every two weeks, or weekly, doesn't have to be scary. In fact, it is life changing and life giving! Here we share 11 amazing things that happen when you go to Confession more often.

1. You Gain a Healthy Knowledge of Your Sin

Regular Confession helps you recognize the little sins as well as the big, dramatic ones. You can see patterns, you can identify seams of weakness. You can pinpoint attitudes, not just actions, that are damaging. Rather than Confession being a once-a-year-momentous shot of grace (which we still encourage!), regular Confession truly allows you to dig deep and get to the root of long-standing habits of sin.

2. You Are More Compassionate with Others' Shortcomings

When you are aware that you commit the same sins again and again, you become far more accepting of other people's failings. The annoying person in the office, the sibling you always argue with, the student you teach that winds you up. All become humanized again. You recognize you have your failings, they have theirs. Like you, they probably have a myriad of different and painful reasons as to why they behave as they do. You are no better than them. They are no better than you.

3. You Can Begin to Forgive Others – Especially Deep Wounds

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4. You Get to Experience a Wide Range of the Church's Ministry

If possible, it is a really good habit to try and seek out a good priest who you can see regularly for Confession. This way he can get to know you and help you see patterns and attitudes over time. However, making the habit of regular Confession means that you're more likely to feel comfortable popping into a random church that you're passing, or joining the queue at a retreat or Catholic conference, and this way you can experience a wide range of different priests. All priests are different, and though the Sacrament of Confession will be absolutely the same each time, the advice, insight, intuition and penance will be different depending on who you see. This can be really interesting and helpful! Different priests will be able to pinpoint different things, and assure you of God's mercy in ways that you had never thought of before.

5. You Gain a Working Understanding of God's Mercy

Regular Confession is not intended to make you scrupulous. Rather, when you go to Confession and repeat the same sins again and again, you see that God's mercy is ever fresh, ever new, and always abundant. He is always patient with us.

6. You Become More Patient with Yourself

A priest once told me, "Don't worry about repeating the same sins again and again in Confession – be grateful that there are no new sins to add!" Confession helps us realize what our failings are, and that often, "if it weren't those particular sins, it would be something else." Knowing our sins is always a grace. When we know them, we can ask God to come in and triumph over them. We can be patient, knowing that, in good time, God will heal our wounds.

7. Deep Personal Wounds Start to Heal and Acts of Grace Abound

God always honors someone who persistently and patiently offers up their failings to Him and humbly asks for help. Confession is like cleaning and redressing a wound. The wound may not heal immediately, but it is never going to heal at all if it is not regularly cleaned and carefully redressed. Over time, the repeated cleaning and care for the wound eventually heals it. For years, I mentioned my poor drinking habits in Confession nearly every time I went. I was at a loss to know how to fix my addiction. But I knew I had to mention it each time. Eventually, I was given an amazing moment of grace and I haven't touched alcohol again. The next time I went to Confession I was stunned. I didn't need to mention it! Looking back, I could see how God had worked with me and through me, even when I was in

despair at ever being healed.

8. Your Personal Relationship with Jesus Grows

Only a sinner needs a savior. The more we recognize our sin, the more we realize we need a Savior, and the more we need a Savior, the more personal our relationship with Jesus becomes. Confession is a Sacrament, there are few ways that we can meet Jesus more personally than in Confession – and the Eucharist, of course! Christ comes into our soul, sees that we are suffering, acknowledges our humility and sorrow, takes us by the hand, picks us up, dusts us down, and sets us on our feet again “with dignity.”

9. Your Reception of the Eucharist is Clarified

The purer the state of our souls, the more we can see clearly. Regular Confession means we are in a better state of grace to receive the Eucharist and can more lovingly, carefully, and reverently welcome Jesus into our hearts, and be far more receptive to His voice in our lives. In knowing His mercy on a regular basis, we grow in love for Him and gratitude for the Institution of the Eucharist which He left us with.

10. You Start to Seek Integrity in All You Do (i.e Life Isn't About Just “Not Sinning”)

When you commit to regular Confession, you start to see habits and attitudes which lead to sin. Light gets into the dark places that you'd prefer to stay hidden, but that isn't as scary as it sounds. You start to really want to live your life with integrity in all things, and you see that Confession – and life – isn't about simply “not sinning.” It is about living alongside Jesus, so that His heart directs your heart, and all your actions orientate themselves to Him. We find peace when our lives are centered on Him, not on ourselves. That doesn't mean “thinking less of ourselves,” but, rather, thinking of ourselves less, and Him more.

11. You Want to Go Back!

When you've committed to regular Confession, you start to notice if you haven't been in a long time. This may not be in any dramatic way, but you might start to notice a dragging feeling, a heaviness of heart, or a sense that things need putting back to rights. Confession is never easy to go to, it's often not a pleasant prospect until it's over, it is hard to do. But regular Confession does make the process easier. It means we are more likely to run into the loving arms of a forgiving Father when we know we've messed up, and it takes away the annual fear-factor of going. We realize how precious a sacrament Confession is, and that we should never take it, or our priests, for granted.

If it's been a long time since you last went to Confession, we really encourage and invite you to go back. Maybe you've been thinking about it for some time, and just need a little nudge in the right direction. Well, here's your sign! You can check out our handy 7 Step Survival Guide for Returning to Confession, and please know we're praying for you.