



If we confess our sins,  
God will forgive us  
1 John 1:9.

## Time to Fess Up

**Read:** Mark 1:9-15

On Ash Wednesday we hear the words “Repent and believe in the Gospel” when the priest marks our foreheads with ashes. These are the very words from the Gospel reading and they mark the beginning of Christ’s mission. Everything Jesus does points towards his cross. As Fulton J. Sheen said, Jesus’ entire purpose was to enter into the world and to die for our sins so that we might be reconciled with the Father.

One of the tragedies that have befallen the Church is that so many people no longer go to the sacrament of confession. The gospel story of the healing of the ten lepers is directly connected to the biblical foundations of confession. Christ heals the lepers and then tells them to go show themselves to the priest (Luke 17:11-19). In the Old Testament physical illness was seen as a sin (Jn 9:2), and the sinner, i.e. the individual who contracted the disease, was exiled from the community. Only God can forgive sins (Mk 2:7) but it is the priest who declares an individual clean (Mk 1:44, Lev 14:2-4).

In John 20:23 Jesus said to his disciples, “If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” By doing so Jesus gave his apostles the ability to forgive sins in his name. This ministry is carried on through the apostolic succession of priests. The priest, as a minister of God’s mercy, offers the penitent pardon and forgiveness.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 6:23. So real and dangerous are the effects of sin that Jesus came to die for us (Rom 5:8). He ransomed his life for the salvation of the world and continues to offer us his love, mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation. Therefore, let us take advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation, so that we can follow Christ’s call to repent and believe in the gospel.

**What do I want you to do?** Over the course of the next month, find time to go to confession.

If you need some help preparing, visit: <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/confession.php>