

# Why am I a Catholic? Reconciliation and Communion

## 1. We have a Saviour, Jesus Christ!

I was brought up in an environment that was surrounded by Buddhists. A lady that I love the most is also a Buddhist, she is my grandmother. She taught me about kindness, being a good and charitable man. Looking at them, I feel as if there was no difference between Christianity and Buddhism. There are a lot of similarities in both religions, for example, on teaching about sin as a result of attachment:

*In CCC 1849: Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed or a desire contrary to eternal law."*

Until I met a friend of mine whose family members are all Buddhist and father is a preacher in the Buddhism belief. He told me there is not much different between the follower of Buddha and us, the Christian, the follower of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless the not-so-much difference is significant. To reach the ultimate state of happiness, we do not rely on ourselves but to acknowledge that Jesus had died on the cross to redeem us. Moreover, He is continuously guiding us and inviting us into salvation, through His Church. As opposed, Buddha taught the concept of self effort in achieving perfection.

Jesus brings us tremendous DISCOUNT.

As a Christian, we have a SAVIOUR, one that sacrifices himself for the forgiveness of our sin. We believe in the notion that our Lord is a loving and forgiving God. Our heavenly Father is best described in Jesus teaching about the parable of prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32). God is represented as a father that welcomes his repented son with joy and celebration.

## 2. Sacrament of Reconciliation

Jesus became man to redeem human from the original sin that existed when Adam and Eve followed evil temptation and broke their covenant with God. And He's made it! However as pilgrims on earth, we are bound to earthly life that is often, if not always, subjected to evil temptation, the bad spirit that is jealous of human role in the divine plan.

Jesus, being in complete union with God and Holy Spirit, knew that Human need to be assured of God loving nature that is able to forgive those who yield for repentance. Hence He equipped His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church with the gift of sacraments, in particular sacrament of reconciliation.

In Catholic Church, Reconciliation is closely associated with "Confession". I used to think that sacrament of reconciliation is completed when we declared our sins in front of the priest and done with our penance which is usually in the form of prayers, assigned by the confessor. This is not fully true; Sacrament of reconciliation is more than just going for confession and penance.

The story of prodigal son summarizes the process of reconciliation, on which our church's sacrament of reconciliation is based on. The son, who has left his father, undergoes a process of conversion which leads to his humble repentance. He went back to his father and intended to confess his sin. Surprisingly, against the norm, the father does not even wait until the regretful declaration from his son's mouth but welcome his son with joyful celebration.

Deriving from the parable, Sacrament of reconciliation encompasses:

## 1. Conversion

It is an ongoing process that leads to sincere penance. In the New Testament, conversion is represented by the word “METANOIA”, which suggest an internal turnabout, a change of heart that is revealed in one’s conduct. A true conversion of heart will lead to the act of penance, which means taking steps in the direction of living a changed life, it means making room for something new.

### **ACTION:**

Be aware of the temptation of the evil spirit! He is a good commando that is able to probe our weak points and launch focus attacks, mostly psychological attacks, on those area that we are weak in. Our action should be an “ABSOLUTE NO” towards all this temptation.

At the same time, we have to be aware of our sinful habit. The earth tends to rationalized everything and it leads us into bigger tolerance of guilt. Praying and reading bible will help to identify those loop-holes in our life. When we are aware of the sins that we have, do not give up. Remember the abundant mercy that God has for human.

## 2. Confession

As previously mentioned, Confession does not represent the whole reconciliation process. However, this act of humility is necessary for three reasons, namely:

- To satisfy our humanly needs to externalized bodily. Human-beings do not live in his mind only, we need to see, hear and feel forgiveness – not just think about it. Just like a person that is asking forgiveness from ones that badly affected by his action. One will not feel peace unless the word of forgiveness come out of the mouth of the person that he has harmed.

The power of absolution is given by Christ to his disciples as beautifully summarized in

**CCC 1441:** *Only God forgive sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, “The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” and exercises this divine power: “Your sins are forgiven.” Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name.*

**John 20:21-23:** *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them “Receive the holy spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”*

- A sign of God’s love. Through the real act of confession, we are reminded of the forgiving nature of our Father. This is in accordance to the meaning of the word “sacrament” which means “*a visible sign of an invisible reality*” in the word of St. Augustine.
- A seal of our intention to return to God. Personally, I feel confession is a way to authenticate my intention to break apart from my sin. It gives me motivation to say an “absolute no” towards sinning.

### **ACTION:**

The church obliges her people to confess sins at least once a year. She also encourages daily confession of venial sins. A good confession should be preceded by a sincere “examination of conscience”, such as: reflection on the Ten Commandments. Strive to declare sins that we can remember, as written in

**CCC 1456:** *Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance: “All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of*

*the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly.*

*When Christ's faithful strive to confess all the sins that they can remember, the undoubtedly place all of them before the divine mercy for pardon. But those who fail to do so and knowingly withhold some, place nothing before the divine goodness for remission through the mediation of the priest, "for if the sick person is too ashamed to show his wound to the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not know."*

Go for confession this advent season!

### **3. Celebration**

The father, upon seeing that His long missing son returned, leaped with joy and instantaneously commanded his servants to bring the finest robe, ring and sandals for his son. He even celebrates with a feast.

We too have to welcome sinners that repented and help him or her to maintain the resolution against his/her sins. Just like the servant we are called to serve the sinners, learning from our saviour Jesus. As He ever said to his disciples, whomever amongst them that want to be the greatest, have to be the humblest and servant to others.

The celebration is a communal celebration that involves the whole family. In Catholic Church, such celebration culminates in our Eucharistic celebration. A celebration that calls for unity as what Jesus had prayed at the hour of His passion,

*John 17:20-21: "I prayed not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me"*

Catholic Church preserves the tradition of Eucharistic celebration that brings us into unity with our brother and sisters on earth as well as those in purgatory and in heaven. It is a full communion of the faithful that unite us to Christ and at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins.

*St Ambrose wrote, "For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord's death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have remedy."*

Sin and unity cannot co-exist. As the church teaches us:

*CCC 817: Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies and disputes. Where there is virtue, however there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.*

#### **ACTION:**

Understand the meaning of our rich ritual and attend mass with different perspective. The details of our mass are taken from the Holy Scripture. It summarized the whole story of salvation.