

SIN - REPENTANCE - HEALING

CONFESSION WITH A DIFFERENCE

Jesus, You Can Cure Me The Healing Power of Jesus

- ✓ *These jottings were primarily tailored for a full day sessions in preparation for Dialogued Confessions for a group of College Students at retreat time.*
- ✓ *They have been used outside retreat time:*
 - *For catechism classes*
 - *For prayer session*
 - *For personal reflection and examination*
 - *For recollections on the Sacrament of Penance*
 - *For penitential services.*

Introductory Notes

1. In this exercise we place the main emphasis **both on sin as a spiritual sickness and on confession as an experience of the healing power of Jesus** active in the Sacrament of Penance.
2. We strongly encourage people to approach the sacrament of confession not only to have their sins forgiven, but even more, **to have themselves healed of their spiritual and moral illnesses.**
3. **Sins are truly symptoms of spiritual and moral weakness.**
4. **At penance and confession, it is not so much the symptoms – that is, our sinful actions - that we are to tackle, but much more, their underlining cause, namely, our moral and spiritual infirmities.**
5. The fact that we cannot remove altogether the symptoms of our moral and spiritual sicknesses does not mean that we should not strive towards spiritual healing.
6. Through this exercise, counting on God's grace, we try to create in the penitents a keen realization of their sinfulness and a deep awareness of their radical incapacity to get rid of their sinfulness only through their own efforts.
7. **They need to experience deeply their sinfulness as well as, their inability to help themselves if they have to turn to God for healing.**

Dynamics of this Exercise :

- Through five **progressive steps**, we try to create in the participants, **a realization that the sacrament of reconciliation can heal them from their sinful ways.**
- In this way we prepare them to approach the sacrament of penance with a healthier and a more optimistic attitude, hoping that their confessional practice will be more practical, fruitful and relevant.

Five progressive steps in preparation for a relevant and fruitful confession

One	A deep realization that we are sinners.
Two	Awareness that our sinfulness consists more in our being weak than wicked. Our sinfulness, in a true sense. is a spiritual sickness.

Three	Try as we may, we cannot heal ourselves of our spiritual sicknesses.
Four	We need God's assistance. Christ, the Son of God, has not only the power to heal us of our moral and spiritual sicknesses, but also He has the will to do it!
Five	To secure Christ's healing we have to surrender our sinfulness to him in complete confidence and faith. It is precisely in the sacrament of penance where we place ourselves most closely under his healing power.

PROCEDURE:

Introductory Session: -

Singing hymns

Opening prayer

Step One:

WE ARE SINNERS. Man's Sinfulness – Our Sinfulness “

A) The wrong we do not want to do, WE DO!”

First: Emphatically read the quote from Letter of St. Paul to the Romans given below

(Ro. 7/14-25).

- “We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a mortal man, sold as a slave to sin.
- **I do not understand what I do; for I do not do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.**
- When I do what I do not want to do, this shows that I agree that the Law is right.
- So, I am not really the one who does this thing; **rather it is the sin that lives in me.**
- I know that good does not live in me - that is in my human nature.
- **Because even though the desire to do what is good is in me, I am not able to do it.**
- **I do not do the good I want to do. Instead I do the evil I do not want to do.**
- **So, I find that this Law is at work; when I want to do what is good, what is evil is the only choice I have.**
- My inner being delights in the Law of God. But I see a different law at work in my body – a law that fights against the law that my mind approves of.
- **It makes me a prisoner to sin which is at work in my body.**
- What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?
- Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ”

Then:: Make your comments

Note for the Retreat Director

- ✓ *Be as forceful as you can. speak from your own experience*
- ✓ *Be down-to-earth. Appeal to the experience of the participants.*
- ✓ *Avoid theories. Comment on facts.*
- ✓ *Keep in mind that unless a vivid awareness is created in the participants of their sinfulness and of their radical incapacity to help themselves, the sacrament of confession will never make much sense to them.*

Give examples of our every day life.

- We hate evil things like anger, laziness, greed, lust, gluttony, drunkenness, envy, jealousy, cruelty, exploitation, revengefulness, etc.
- Yet, time and again, we fall into these evils!
- We hurt and abuse our friends; later on we kick ourselves for it!
- We wrong the people we love most; our parents, brothers and sisters, etc. then we feel guilty for it.
- We neglect our work and our duties, then we regret!
- We drink to excess, we fall prey to lust, to jealousy, to envy, to gluttony, etc. We act mean, we curse, etc. Next we feel rotten about it!
- We resolve time and again not to do evil, yet, in spite of our best wishes, we fall over and over again!

B) The right We want to do, WE DO NOT DO!" (Romans 7/18)**Give examples of our every day life**

Request them to remember the many times they the broke their promises and not done the good they wanted to do. .

- We want to be good to others, yet, we act nasty..
- We are full of good wishes but nothing comes out of them!
- We make resolutions galore only to shelf them away next moment.
- We take vows and break them all too quickly!
- We give solemn assurances, guarantees, promises but they all turn out futile!

Help them to make sort of a general examination of conscience.

They need not go into details.

Just help them to be aware of their SINFULNESS.

**Step Two: **

WE SIN BECAUSE WE ARE WEAK, NOT WICKED.

WE ARE SPIRITUALLY AND MORALLY SICK.

Assist the Participants to go through the points below

Ask the Retreatants to question themselves before God.

Remember the many times you have sinned and ask yourselves these questions:

(Pause between question and question.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Are you wicked and corrupt? | Not at all! |
| 2. Are you unwilling and obstinate? | Not at all! |
| 3. Then, what are you? | What's wrong with you? |
| ✓ You are weak. | Not wicked! |
| ✓ You are frail. | Not incorrigible! |
| ✓ You are infirm. | Not corrupt! |

Truly, all of us have sinned.

Yet, we are not wicked, but weak!

Step Three:

ON OUR OWN WE CANNOT HEAL OURSELVES SPIRITUALLY AND MORALLY WE ARE NOT ABLE TO HELP OURSELVES

*Assist the Participants to reflect on the points below
Pause between question and question.*

1. Have you ever tried to get rid of your sins? Surely Yes!
2. Have you ever struggled to be good? Surely Yes!
3. Have you ever succeeded 100%? Not at all!
4. How do you feel about it?
 - ✓ Dwell on your feelings of frustration and failure.
 - ✓ Pause for a while for silent prayer and reflection.

Step Four:

WE NEED GOD'S ASSISTANCE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, HAS BOTH THE POWER TO HEAL OUR SICKNESSES AND THE WILL TO DO IT!

A) Read: St. Paul wrote (Romans 7/24-25):

“My inner being delights in the Law of God. But I see a different law at work in my Body, a law that fights against the law that my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to sin which is at work in my body. What an unhappy man I am!

Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?

Thanks be to God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ!”

B) Comment

- If we are not able to heal ourselves from our sinfulness.....
- If we are incapable of tearing ourselves from sin.....
- If we cannot cure ourselves from our spiritual and moral sicknesses...
- Let us not feel frustrated any more!
- **Our Lord Jesus Christ is there to rescue us from our bondage to sin and heal us from our infirmities**

C) “Jesus Has the Power to Heal all sicknesses’ A reflection on Chapters 8 and 9 of Mathew.

- Give the Participants an over-view of the Healing Ministry of Jesus as portrayed in chapters 8 and 9 of the Gospel of St. Mathew.
- Next, ask the Participants to reflect on and answer to these points:
 1. What is the main theme of these two chapters? (*Healing*).
 2. What sort of diseases was Jesus healing the people of? (*All sorts of sicknesses and diseases. Physical sicknesses Mt .8/3, 13,14, & 9/6, 22, 25, 30. Mental & Psychological Sicknesses: Mt. 8/16, 32; & 9/33*)

3. Can you find in these chapters some passages where Jesus openly shows his willingness to heal? (*Jesus makes a Leper clean: Mt. 8/3*).
4. Is there any passage in these chapters where Jesus cures people of “**spiritual sicknesses**”? (*Jésus cures Paralyzed Man. Mt. 9/1-7. Mt. 9/2, 5*)
5. Are there in these Gospel’s narratives, instances of Jesus expecting **some special disposition** from those to be healed? What are those dispositions? Mention the passages concerned (*Faith. Mt. 8/10-13, & 9/2, 22, 28-29*)

Step Five:

To secure Christ’s Healing we have to Surrender our Moral and Spiritual asicknesses to Him in Complete Confidence and Faith in the Sacrament of Penance or Heilig

A) Introductory Ideas - Symptoms Vs. Diseases

Suggested Thoughts for the Moderato

- There is a basic difference between symptoms and disease. Symptoms only show that there is something wrong with our health. Symptoms, in themselves, are not sicknesses. Headaches, fever, vomiting, stomachaches, diarrhea, etc. are not diseases but symptoms of some disease or other, like cholera, typhoid, etc.
- To cure a person from his sickness it is not enough to tackle the symptoms. We have to tackle the root cause of the sickness. Once the illness is cured, the symptoms will disappear
- In the spiritual and moral order, the same thing applies. There are symptoms of deep maladies; for example, lies, disobedience, cynicism, anger may be symptoms of pride! It would be useless to tackle these symptoms unless we try to cure the underlying sickness of pride!
- We have to get to the root of our troubles. Painkillers will never cure a man from any disease, though they may, temporarily, take the some of the symptoms away. They are only palliatives, not cures.
- Confession is not meant to kill the pain we feel because of our sins. Confession should not be used as a palliative. Confession should aim at a radical cure.
- Many persons, time and again, keep going for Confession, yet they do not experience much improvement in their moral and spiritual lives. Such people, most likely, keep confessing only ‘symptoms’ without knowing what’s the real trouble – what’s the root cause of their sins.
- In order to discover our true ‘spiritual’ sicknesses, first we have to go through a thorough examination of conscience. We may even require the guidance of spiritual Father or Councilor.
- Once we discover our true sicknesses, we may be able to ask Our Lord Jesus at Confession to heal us.

B) An Examination of Conscience as a Spiritual Diagnose.

Moderator, Kindly guide your Participants through the following steps.

1. **Think and Reflect:** What are your most common failures and sins?
2. **Write them down.** Compile a list of them.

3. **Read your list very carefully several times** then, question yourself:
4. **Are these common failures of yours only symptoms' or 'illnesses'?**
5. **If illnesses what are they. Write them down.**
6. **If you think that they are just symptoms,** question yourself: **what spiritual or moral sickness are they symptoms of? Write them down.**
7. Do you really want to be cured of your moral and spiritual sicknesses? **Then, go, as soon as possible, to meet your confessor and discuss your problems with him.**
8. Ask him not only to forgive you your sins but even more **to advise you how to be healed of your moral and spiritual sicknesses.**

C) Prayer before Confession to obtain a Strong Faith in Jesus' Power to Heal You! *Guide the Participants through the following Prayer.*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Think of the 'spiritual sickness or sicknesses' you have found in you.
3. Decide which particular **spiritual sickness you want to be cured of first all.**
4. Take Mathew 17/14-20. Reflect and pray on the words of Jesus, especially verse 20. **Remember this! If you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill: Go from here to there! And it will go. You could do anything!"**
5. Pray to Jesus with great faith, like the Leper of the Gospel, to cure you. **Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean" (Mt. 8/2)**
6. Keep praying and pestering the Lord for spiritual healing.

D) Sacramental Confession.

- If priests are available, encourage the Participants to make a sacramental confession.
- Let them earnestly ask the priest to pray over them for 'spiritual and moral healing, for wholeness'.
- While the confessions go on, you may play soft sacred music, or penitential hymns.

NOTE:

You may hold a Paraliturgical Penitential Service in case Priests are not available for Confessions.

- If priests are not available, request the participants to go for confession on their own as soon as possible.
- In place of the sacrament of confession you may hold a penitential Paraliturgu '.
- Make it short and impressive.
- We offer below some hints for this paraliturgu
 - ✓ Praying for one another
 - ✓ Those who wish to be prayed upon in an general way may ask the group to do so.

- ✓ If anyone feels like, he may disclose to the group, in a generic way, the ‘spiritualsickness’ he wants to be healed of and request those present to pray for him or over him.
- ✓ Read some N. T. texts on forgiveness and healing like:

Woman caught in adultery	Jn 8/1-11
Mary Magdalene	Lk 7/36-4
Zacchaeus	Lk 19/1-10
The Good Thief	Lk 23/32-33; 39-43
Peter after his fall.	Jn 21/15-19
- ✓ All together recite the “I Confess” and/or other penitential prayers.
- ✓ You may suggest some symbolic actions like burning the slips of paper on which they have written their symptoms and spiritual sickness.
- ✓ End the service with a thanksgiving hymn.