

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
January 18, 1950

"Ask And You Shall Receive."

Saturday afternoon, main church, January 21st, 4:00--6:00 four priests will be on hand to hear your confessions. This is to accommodate January graduates. If you are to make a general confession, come prepared. If all can not be heard at that time, the rest may go to Cavanaugh and Dillon chapels between 7:30 and 10:00 Saturday nite.

Pointers For General Confession: Part 1.

A general confession is one made of all the sins of your past life or of a period back to your last general confession. It may be necessary or devotional.

It is necessary in those cases where a known mortal sin was deliberately concealed in a past confession....Many penitents are tormented by doubtful mortal sins. They are uncertain whether they ever confessed this mortal sin or that one, whether they had sufficient knowledge about the sin when it was committed. They are uncertain if they confessed the details of the sin sufficiently, uncertain if the priest understood them, uncertain if they were truly sorry, etc.

The catechism for the Diocese of Rome states: "If a person is not sure of having committed a sin, he is not obliged to confess it; but if he wishes to, he must add that he is not sure of having committed it." If you are not certain of having made a bad confession, then do not admit that you positively have--just to be safe.

The Council of Trent tells you that in each confession you are bound to confess all mortal sins of which you are conscious. In the event of a doubtful bad confession or a doubtful mortal sin you are not conscious of sin but of a doubt about sin.

Before it is obligatory to review the past and make a general confession, you must be certain: 1) that the sin you omitted was a mortal sin, and that you knew it was a mortal sin at the time you committed it; 2) that it has been unconfessed.

It must be a mortal sin for you. In your childhood or youth you may have done something (objectively) seriously sinful, without knowing (subjectively) at that time it was gravely sinful. Remember this: God always judges you by the knowledge you had then, not according to the knowledge you have now. Subsequent knowledge does not affect the guilt of an action committed in the past. New moral knowledge is not retroactive.

Furthermore, you must be certain that this mortal sin has not been confessed before, and you knew then it should have been. Hence, a bad confession is made only when you want to make a bad confession. Rather foolish--but it may happen through shame or fear.

On the other hand, it is comforting to know that you can not make a bad confession if you think you are making a good one. So as long as you have been honestly trying to make good confessions all your life--you have been. The same principle is applied in regard to Holy Communion. You can not be guilty of a sacrilegious communion in good faith. Forgotten mortal sins do not invalidate a good confession or a good communion.

If there is moral certainty a sacrilegious confession has been made in the past, and has never been taken care of in subsequent confessions--only then is the general confession necessary. It must include the original bad confession and all intermediate confessions if they also were sacrilegious. (Whether necessary or devotional a general confession is its own reward--it begets peace. After it one feels so fresh and clean.)
Prayers (deceased) Rev. Patrick McBride, C.S.C.; friend of Howie Murth (Sor); Rev. Martin Jordan, ex-07; Carl Jelinek; friend of Bob Darling and Phil Finnegan (Alu); grandfather of Paul Coogan (Ly); father of Charles Osborn, '38. III, friend of Harvey O'Neill; grandmother of Bill Degne, '51; aunt of Fr. Gartland, C.S.C. Special Intentions
---3.