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Freedom And Forgiveness: A Fresh Look At The Sacrament Of Reconciliation



Synopsis

The sacrament of Confession is probably the most talked about sacraments in the Catholic Church, as well as a spiritual practice being revived in many Protestant churches. This book explores the sacrament focusing on the two people who confess – God and the penitent. God is the primary confessor when he confesses his forgiveness for and trust in the one who is celebrating the sacrament. The gift of freedom, the existence of hell, and the role of conscience are discussed at length. Jean Vanier in his foreword says: “Somewhere, along the line, in the history of the Church, people have become more centred upon obedience to laws than upon this relationship with love with a person, with Jesus. This book flows from an understanding of Confession as a meeting of love and as a renewal of friendship. How that friendship is renewed is explored using the Rite of Penance and St. Peter in the Gospel. This helps us understand what happens in the sacrament and how we can celebrate it. Ultimately, Fr. Paul describes reconciliation as God’s gift to us to express God’s humble forgiveness and his confidence in us and also the place where we take responsibility for our lives.” For anyone who is fearful of going to Reconciliation this is perfect. This book gives the reader a desire to go running to Reconciliation for God’s mercy, forgiveness and love.” Marilyn Moran RCIA Coordinator - Diocese of Bridgeport Office of Pastoral Services Parish RCIA Director - Assumption Parish - Westport CT "Father Paul's new book is a beautiful invitation into the sacrament of reconciliation, perhaps the most misunderstood sacrament in the church. With his clear, helpful and accessible writing, Freedom and Forgiveness reminds the reader that the sacrament is about not how bad you are, but about how good God is." James Martin, SJ, author of "Jesus: A Pilgrimage"

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Customer Reviews

Pope Francis made headlines when, during Lent, he stunned onlookers by received confession publicly at St. Peter's Basilica before hearing the confession from the faithful. However, as radically different many find this pope, his theology and practice is consistent with Catholic teaching post-Vatican II. A new book from Father Paul Farren explores the practice, purpose and meaning behind the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In *Freedom and Forgiveness: A Fresh Look at the Sacrament of Reconciliation*, Farren examines the history of the sacrament and the ways it brings us into a deeper experience of God. Confession is somewhat daunting for many of us; yet Farren argues, "Our understanding of the sacrament reveals our image of God. If our image of God is one of an uncompromising judge, then the sacrament can fill us with dread. (1)" Instead of coming to confession to avoid judgement and hellfire, Farren paints a picture of the Sacrament of Reconciliation which has a loving God behind it who longs for a restored relationship with His children. In Farren's short book he explores how confession brings us into the realm of freedom and forgiveness, reveals the nature of God and of ourselves, and produces in us a proper sorrow for our sins. Farren also give practical instruction for those who wish to enter deeper into the practice of Confession, both in its formal parish celebration and in preparation for it. This is a Catholic book which I read as a non-Catholic Christian. While my ecclesiastical membership is once removed from Rome, I think that this is one area we (protestants) can stand to learn from our Catholic brothers and sisters: Confession is good for the Soul.

Freedom and Forgiveness: A Fresh Look at the Sacrament of Reconciliation by Father Paul Farren Two very simple words yet profound in their implications, freedom and forgiveness offer the human race a way forward in dealing with the problems and conundrums of life on Earth. Father Paul Farren in his book, *Freedom and Forgiveness* takes a hard look at the Sacrament of Reconciliation and looks at from the angle as God the Confessor. He writes, "What does God confess? He confesses his love, his forgiveness, his gratitude, his confidence, his trust, and his belief in us" (1). We often go around seeing God as unyielding judge who can't wait to tally up

our rights and wrongs, but fail to see the pursuing God of love for his creation. Father Farren brings to the forefront a concept of beliefs surrounding God's love that is worth mentioning, especially for myself, steeped in Reformational Protestant theology. Farren writes, "Do many of us really believe that we are terrific? What is meant to be terrific? Does it mean that be perfect and able to do anything? Does it mean to have no weakness? I don't think so. Are we not terrific when we accept that we are originally good and also that we have original sin? Our beauty comes from the whole truth about ourselves. That whole truth involves all that is good in us and all that is broken in us. We are a mixture of both. However, the power of our brokenness decreases when we realize that we are the beloved of God." (20). We err on the side of condemnation when we focus on the brokenness and not speak of the children of God that we are, and yet when we fail to mention the brokenness of our hearts and minds we miss part of the truth about ourselves. Seeking forgiveness is a difficult matter altogether.

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