

## Let Us Pod

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### Confession with Father Chris Boles SJ

#### Father Chris Boles SJ

Chris is a Jesuit priest and Vicar Episcopal for Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. He is the superior of the Edinburgh Jesuit community and Director of its Lauriston Jesuit Centre which presents issues of spirituality, social justice and adult faith formation to the city of Edinburgh and beyond. The centre is ecumenical and inclusive and draws upon many friends and colleagues from the city and elsewhere to help people to better understand their faith. His connection with the Clifton Diocese is through Mary Colwell and the pioneering work being done in Clifton on care for the environment. He is well known for promoting Catholic Social Teaching and gives courses and workshops throughout Scotland.

#### Full text of podcast

My name is Father Chris Boles, from the Jesuit Community in Edinburgh.

The Problem.

Few people regularly go to confession these days.

God already knows what we've done and knows we are sorry.

So why bother to tell a priest or anyone else? It's embarrassing to go to confession, and it's usually just the same old shopping list of sins that hasn't changed much since school days.

It's too difficult to go to a complete stranger and talk about my sins, but on the other hand, it's too difficult to go to a priest who knows who I am.

Better not to go at all therefore.

The more usual name for confession nowadays is the sacrament of reconciliation and this is an important development and a good starting point for thinking about what we do when we go to a priest to confess.

By going to confess we acknowledge we've done some harm, that we've been responsible for a wrongdoing.

By calling it reconciliation we acknowledge that this harm or wrongdoing has somehow to involve healing, and that we need to therefore be reconciled.

As a sacrament it's an intimate encounter with Christ, as intimate as our marvellous daily encounters with the natural world, with those we love, with the world of life and work and play which we inhabit.

It's a moment of grace where we can acknowledge our daily struggle with life, but where we can also acknowledge our daily encounters with the Lord in so many diverse ways.

Anything we bring to the sacrament of reconciliation deals with relationships.

It might be our relationship with a loved one, with a colleague, with a stranger, with someone we don't like.

It might be our relationship with the earth, or our relationship with an organisation, and more precisely the people in that organisation.

It might be our relationship to someone far away whom I will never meet but with whom I have an intimate link through the demands of loving my neighbour.

It is very often our relationship with our self, our own self image, that is rightly the focus of our sacramental encounter.

Whatever it happens to be, we know that when something is broken it needs repaired.

So when relationships are broken, they need repaired too.

Precisely because they are relational, they are best repaired the same way, through relating, and why the sacrament involves another person.

The sacramental encounter begins simply by virtue of our being there.

Our being there is an acknowledgement of our desire to grow and our desire to keep relationships centred on the good, not the bad.

So we speak to the priest of how relationships have been broken, and our own part in that.

This is the essence of repentance.

It's to say "I'm sorry"

Sorry for what?

It might be a lack of trust, dislike of the other or them of me, it might be ignorance of their needs, or many other things.

Then in that conversation, which might be brief or long, we consider what the broken relationship requires.

In repenting we acknowledge that we have a part to play, and through prayer we hand it all to God.

And then absolution brings us to a new beginning.

Everything can be different.

The time will come when healing is required again, when we once again "repent" and that's the time to next experience the sacrament.

*Psalm 51*

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;  
what is evil in your sight I have done.

Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

O purify me, then I shall be clean;  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

For in sacrifice you take no delight,  
burnt offering from me you would refuse;  
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit,  
a humbled, contrite heart, you will not spurn.

Concluding Prayer

Before receiving absolution we usually pray what's called 'an act of contrition', so let's end with the act of contrition that is used by school children here in Edinburgh:

O my God, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.

**Useful contacts**

Father Chris Boles SJ ó [chris.boles@jrs.net](mailto:chris.boles@jrs.net)

Lauriston Jesuit Centre ó [www.lauriston.org.uk](http://www.lauriston.org.uk)

The Jesuits in Britain ó [www.jesuit.org.uk](http://www.jesuit.org.uk)

Archdiocese of St Andrews And Edinburgh - [www.archdiocese-edinburgh.com](http://www.archdiocese-edinburgh.com)

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