

ECFs on Confession/Reconciliation . . .

A study of the **Early Church Fathers (ECFs)** reveals the truths of the Catholic Church. As we have read in past articles, the Early Church carried the teachings of the Apostles over to future generations. These traditions and doctrines are the very same ones we adhere to today – **Confession** is no different. From the very 1st century on, we see that the historic Christian faith had always considered confessing one's sins to the Church a necessity. It wasn't until the Protestant Reformation - some 1500 years later - that this truth was disposed of by some and rendered unnecessary.

The Didache - Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . , On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure (*Didache* 4:14,14:1 [A.D.70]).

The Letter of Barnabas - You shall judge righteously. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify those that contend by bringing them together. You shall confess your sins. This is the way of light (*Letter of Barnabas* 19 [A.D. 74]).

Ignatius of Antioch - For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 [A.D. 110]).

Tertullian - The Church has the power of forgiving sins. This I acknowledge and adjudge (ibid. 21).

Hippolytus - "...and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate... before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command (*Apostolic Tradition* 3 [A.D. 215]).

Cyprian - Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. (A.D. 251]).

John Chrysostom - Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? "Whose sins you shall forgive," he says, "they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (*The Priesthood* 3:5 [A.D. 387]).

For more information, please visit:

http://www.staycatholic.com/early_church_fathers.htm