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2009 Seminar for Priests
April 13-15, 2009
Arnold Hall

The Curé of Ars and the Ars Confessoris

Introduction

- A. Perhaps the most famous aspect of John Vianney is the sacrament of confession.
- B. Pope Benedict¹⁶ gives a nod to it when he declared that the Year of the Priesthood will begin June 19.
 1. My first thought was, “Why would there be an overlap?”
 2. Then I realized it was the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
 3. This is the feast of the Lord’s merciful love.
 4. Not only is the priesthood the “love of the heart of Jesus” but that love is shown above all in his work for sinners.
 - a. John Paul II: This is where he bases his desire to do everything to save the souls ransomed by Christ at such a great price, and to bring them back to the love of God. Let us recall one of those pithy sayings which he had the knack of uttering: “The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.”
- C. During this Year, he is said to declare John Vianney not merely the patron saint of parish priests — Pope Pius XI did that in 1929 — but the patron of all priests. I think this is Pope Benedict XVI’s way of stressing how important that offering the sacrament of confession is in the life of all priests, whether they’re diocesan or religious, whether they’re working in parishes, or in chancery, or teaching.
- D. “The great miracle of the Curé of Ars,” someone said, “was his confessional, besieged day and night.”

Structure of Talk

1. The focus will be on what we can learn from him about how to be more fruitful confessors, instruments for the Lord.
2. In John Paul II’s 1986 Letter he stressed the urgent need to develop a whole pastoral STRATEGY of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
3. He had special gifts in the confessional. He could help people finish their confessions, to know precisely that it was 33 rather than 30 years since their last confession. Few, perhaps none of us, have or will ever have those gifts.
4. But we can imitate his commitment to the confessional. While we may not have the same charismatic gifts, we can imitate his practices.
5. I’d like to focus on Ten of those practices. Most of the quotations are taken from *Pensées*, a French collection of the thoughts of John Vianney.

Ten Practices

- I. 1. A real conviction of the stakes about the confessional.
 - A. He knew that hell was real, that sin kills, and therefore the importance of confession.
 - B. “When his reputation began to grow through his being the instrument for some miraculous cures of the body, he downplayed their significance, saying that the “body is so very little” and adding, “It is a beautiful thought, my children, that we have a Sacrament which heals the wounds of our soul!”
 - C. “A great miracle is needed to raise a poor soul in that state. Oh, yes! A greater miracle than what the Lord did to raise Lazarus!”
 - D. “I don’t know if it were really a voice I heard or a dream, but, whatever it was, it woke me up, a voice that told me that to save a soul in the state of sin is more pleasing to God than all sacrifices. For that reason, I do all my resolutions for penance.”
- II. 2. Real loving pity for sinners
 - A. “Oh, if only I could confess for them!”

- B. JP II, 1986. He has a love for his flock that leads him to extreme pastoral commitment and self-sacrifice. Rarely has a pastor been so acutely aware of his responsibilities, so consumed by a desire to wrest his people from the sins of their lukewarmness. "O my God, grant me the conversion of my parish: I consent to suffer whatever you wish, for as long as I live."
- C. To a priest who complained about the indifference of people in his parish, St. John Vianney answered: "You have preached, you have prayed, but have you fasted? Have you taken the discipline (a self imposed scourge)? Have you slept on the floor? So long as you have done none of these things, you have no right to complain.
- III. 3. He prayed for sinners, both before and after confession
- A. Before
1. "Pray for sinners. It's the most beautiful and useful of prayers, because the just are on the way to heaven, the souls of Purgatory are sure to enter there, but the poor sinners, the poor sinners... all devotions are good, but there is not a better one than that."
 2. "One can offer himself as a victim for 8-15 days for the conversion of sinners. One can suffer cold, heat, deprive himself of looking at something, go visit someone who would appreciate it, make a novena, attend daily Mass for this intention in places where it is possible. Not only would one contribute to God's glory by this holy practice, but one would obtain an abundance of grace."
 3. "What souls we can convert by our prayers. The one who saves a soul from hell saves this soul and his own as well."
 4. "Poor sinners! There are some that are on the edge. What souls we can convert by our prayers!"
 5. "I can't stop praying for poor sinners who are on the road to hell. If they come to die in that state, they will be lost for all eternity. What a pity! We have to pray for sinners!"
 6. "The good God has made me see how much he loves that I pray for poor sinners."
 7. "I am only content when praying for sinners."
 8. When someone refused to repent, he redoubled his prayers and penances.
 9. At the approach of great feasts, and especially during Paschal time, he imposed on himself extraordinary fasts."
- B. After
1. When criticized for giving soft penances even to those who were publicly known for having done truly heinous things, he replied that he generally gives light penances so as not to scare hardened sinners from coming, but in justice he himself would do the rest of the penance their sins deserved.
- IV. 4. He persevered patiently in waiting to share the gift of God's mercy with others.
- A. He needed to wait several months for the faculties to hear confessions.
 - B. M. Balley, his own confessor, mentor, pastor and friend, was the first to throw himself at his feet. He chose him for his spiritual director. He asked VG Msgr. Courbon for faculties for Vianney.
 - C. As soon as he was "approved" for confessions, his confessional was besieged.
 - D. When he got to Ars it would take some time to rebuild it.
 - E. Cihak: The faithful of Ars had been scandalized by their pastor, Father Saunier. Educated at the Sorbonne, Ars's pastor took the oath in 1791 and the spiritual unraveling of the parish in Ars began. The next year the parish church was looted and Father Saunier left the priesthood. The sanctuary of the parish church was converted into a club where the "free thinkers" of the area held their meetings.
 - F. It would take a while to rebuild. There was not much love of God there.
- V. 5. He had a real joy over the ministry of the confessional.
- A. "Oh my friend, only at the last judgment will it become known how many souls have here found their salvation."
 - B. He made small account of miraculous cures. "The body is so very little," he used to repeat. That which truly filled him with joy was the return of souls to God.
 - C. We can't underestimate the value of even one person confessing. During a diocesan reconciliation weekend in Fall River one priest only heard four confessions in six hours, but two were big fish.

- D. Once John Vianney was asked how many big sinners he had converted in the course of the year. “Over 700.”
- E. He loved sinners with all the hatred which he felt for their sins. He loathed evil and spoke of it with horror and indignation, but felt boundless compassion for the sinners and he lamented over the loss of souls. “My God,” he cried out one day in his room, “is it possible that you should have endured so many torments for their salvation and they should nevertheless be damned!”
- F. He’d shout, “God does not will the death of the sinner.”
- VI. 6. He preached on the sacrament. Preaching is a public invitation. There were several themes:
- A. God’s mercy
1. “The good God will pardon a repentant sinner faster than a mother will grab her child out of a fire.”
 2. “The good God is always disposed to receive us.”
 3. “If only we were able to see how the good God looks on souls with compassion.”
 4. “In the sacrament of penance, God seems to forget justice and only manifests mercy.”
 5. “Jesus took every means possible to find himself among sinners to attract them to his father.”
 6. “God’s greatest pleasure is to forgive us.”
 7. “It’s not the sinner who comes back to God to ask forgiveness, but God himself who runs after the sinner to make him return to us.”
 8. “In the sacrament of penance, God shows us and makes us a part of his infinite mercy.”
 9. “Let us give this joy to the good Father: let us return to him and we will be happy.”
 10. “How good God is! His good heart is an ocean of mercy. Even though we can be great sinners, we should never despair of our salvation. It is so easy to be saved.”
 11. “The good God comes after you, he pursues you after you have abandoned him.”
 12. “Our faults are like grains of sand in comparison with the great mountain of God’s mercies.”
 13. “What are our sins, if we compare them to God’s mercy?”
 14. “The good God knows all things. It knows that after you confess, you will sin again, but he will pardon you. What love God has that he will even voluntarily forget the future to forgive us.”
 15. He showed that the sacrament is about God.
 - a. John Paul II 2001 letter: In the sacrament, the penitent first meets not “the commandments of God” but, in Jesus, “the God of the commandments.”
- B. The great gift of the sacrament of confession
1. “My children,” he said in one catechesis, “we cannot comprehend the goodness of God towards us in instituting this great Sacrament of Penance. If we had had a favor to ask of our Lord, we should never have thought of asking him that. But he foresaw our frailty and our inconstancy in well-doing, and his love led him to do what we should not have dared to ask.”
 2. “It’s beautiful to think that we have a sacrament that heals the wounds of our soul.”
 3. “One cannot fully comprehend the goodness of God in instituting for us the great sacrament of penance.”
 4. “Without the sacrament of penance, it would be fitting to weep.”
- C. Hell
1. He’d say to those listeners who wished to be damned to “commit as few mortal sins as possible, so as not to add to their everlasting punishments!”
 2. About Last Judgment, he repeated several times, “Cursed by God! Cursed by God! What a misfortune!” He started crying. It was real.
 3. “If one were to say to the poor souls that are damned in hell forever, ‘We are going to put a priest at the gates of hell. All those who would like to leave only have to confess.’ My children, do you believe that one soul would remain? Even the most guilty would say their sins and even before the whole world.”
- D. The horror of sin

1. When the situation warranted, however, the Curé would preach against sin with the force of an Old Testament prophet. "To be a Christian and to live in sin," he clamored, "is a monstrous condition. A Christian must be holy."
- E. The duties of a pastor to preach about sin
 1. JP II said in 1986: The Cure had the courage to denounce evil in all its forms; he did not keep silent, for it was a question of the eternal salvation of his faithful people: "If a pastor remains silent when he sees God insulted and souls going astray, woe to him! If he does not want to be damned, and if there is some disorder in his parish, he must trample upon human respect and the fear of being despised or hated." This responsibility was his anguish as a parish priest. But as a rule, "he preferred to show the attractive side of virtue rather than the ugliness of vice," and if he spoke - sometimes in tears - about sin and the danger for salvation, he insisted on the tenderness of God who has been offended, and the happiness of being loved by God, united to God, living in his presence and for him.
- F. Need for penance.
 1. "How good it is to offer yourself every morning in sacrifice to the Good God, as an expiation for your sins."
- G. How to make a good confession
 1. "To receive the sacrament of penance, we need three things: the faith that sees God in the priest, the hope that can make us believe that God will give us the grace of forgiveness, and the love that brings us to love God and which makes us regret in the heart ever having offended him."
 2. Examination
 - a. "We will do well to make an examination of conscience every night. "
 - b. "It is necessary to put your conscience in order better than you put order to your business affairs."
 3. Contrition
 - a. "It is necessary to spend more time asking for contrition than making the examination of conscience."
 - b. "Contrition is the balm of the soul."
 - c. "You see a house that is all filthy. It is the same with your soul. After the examination, even after confession... it is necessary to have contrition to wash it."
 4. Firm purpose of amendment
 - a. "It's said that there are many who confess but few who convert. I well believe it, because there are few who confess with repentance."
 - b. "We trust too much in our resolutions and promises and not enough on the good God."
 5. Absolution
 - a. "When the priest gives absolution, it's necessary to think of only one thing: that the blood of the good God is flowing through our soul to wash it, purify it and make it as beautiful as it was after baptism."
 6. Other dispositions
 - a. "The penitent should pray that the good God give to his confessor the necessary light and grace."
 - b. "The good God will pardon only those who pardon: that's the law."
 7. Not useless words
 - a. "Avoid all the useless accusations, which waste the confessor's time, fatigues those who are waiting to confess and extinguishes devotion."
- H. About the fear people have in going to confession.
 1. "Is it really humiliating to accuse yourself of your sins? The priest knows well what you're capable of."
 2. "The priest will have mercy on us, he will cry with us."
- I. John Paul II mentioned very often our need for catechesis:

1. JP II in 2001 letter: Then there is also the fundamental problem of catechetical teaching about the moral conscience and about sin, so that people can have a clearer idea of the radical demands of the Gospel. Unfortunately, there exists a minimalist tendency which prevents the Sacrament from producing all the benefits that we might hope for. Many of the faithful have an idea of sin that is not based on the Gospel but on common convention, on what is socially "acceptable". This makes them feel not particularly responsible for things that "everybody does", and all the more so if these things are permitted by civil law.
 2. In Reconciliation & Penance (JP II apostolic exhortation) 26, he said that we have to give a Biblically based catechesis on:
 - a. Catechesis on *Reconciliation with God and others*.
 - b. Catechesis on *Penance*, the type of metanoia, a real overturning of the soul, that leads to deeds of penance to reestablish the harmony undone by sin.
 - i. "A catechesis on penance, therefore, and one that is as complete and adequate as possible, is absolutely essential at a time like ours, when dominant attitudes in psychology and social behavior are in such contrast with the threefold value just illustrated. Contemporary man seems to find it harder than ever to recognize his own mistakes and to decide to retrace his steps and begin again after changing course. He seems very reluctant to say "I repent " or " I am sorry." He seems to refuse instinctively, and often irresistibly, anything that is penance in the sense of a sacrifice accepted and carried out for the correction of sin."
 - ii. "Penance out of LOVE FOR GOD. It is not uncommon for non-Christians to be surprised at the negligible witness of true penance on the part of Christ's followers. It is clear, however, that Christian penance will only be authentic if it is inspired by love and not by mere fear; if it consists in a serious effort to crucify the "old man" so that the "new" can be born by the power of Christ; if it takes as its model Christ, who though he was innocent chose the path of poverty, patience, austerity and, one can say, the penitential life."
 - c. Catechesis on *conscience*
 - i. "Man's conscience is too often attacked, put to the test, confused and obscured".
 - d. Catechesis on *the sense of sin*
 - e. Catechesis on *temptation and temptations*. Christ was tempted but we will never be tempted beyond the strength of God.
 - f. Catechesis is also expected on *fasting* as a sign of conversion, repentance and mortification.
 - g. Catechesis on *almsgiving*
 - h. Catechesis on the *concrete circumstances in which reconciliation has to be achieved*
 - i. in the family, in the civil community, in social structures
 - ii. and particularly catechesis on the four reconciliations which repair the four fundamental rifts:
 - a) reconciliation of man with God,
 - b) with self,
 - c) with the brethren
 - d) and with the whole of creation
 - i. A constant catechesis on what the traditional Christian language calls *the four last things of man*: death, judgment (universal and particular), hell and heaven.
 - j. Catechesis on *the sacrament of reconciliation itself*
 - i. Divine foundation
 - ii. Priestly instrumentality in persona Christi
 - iii. Confession within God's eternal plan
- VII. 7. He invited people directly to the sacrament
- A. He also made direct invitations to people who had come to Church with others but were not intending to go. He'd point to the confessional. "Put yourself there." "I don't feel like it." "Well, begin."
 - B. He went to a hotel room of a boatman who was a hardened sinner. "I have not come here to play the devotee," he said to John Vianney. "Leave me in peace! I am anxious to be off." "So you do not want to

have pity on your soul, my friend” while gently grabbing his hand. He left. The man came in the morning.

- C. To a man who refused to go to confession but instead to go hunting, he said, “Monsieur, it is greatly to be wished that your soul were as beautiful as your dog!” The man reflected on it for a long-time. Eventually he entered Church. Realizing the value of his soul, he entered the Trappist monastery at John Vianney’s word.

VIII. 8. He made himself available for confession

- A. “The good God is always disposed to receive us.” He made himself available.
- B. 12 hours in the winter, 18 during the summer
- C. Unending rows.
- D. It didn’t start this way. His ministry in the confessional began to explode when a group of women, moved by seeing him praying in the Church after midnight, asked if he would hear their confessions. He happily assented. His tears in the confessional — out of love for them and sorrow for their sins — brought them, too, to tears, introduced them to a whole new level of contrition for their sins, and gave them a taste of the holiness to which we’re all called. The women began to spread the word that there was something special about the way their pastor heard confession.
- E. One day in 1845, three thousand penitents arrived. About 120,000 people arrived that year. Train tickets from Lyons to Ars were valid for eight days, because that is about how long someone could have to wait to go to confession.
- F. In a 1986 letter to priests on the bicentennial of the Curé’s birth, Pope John Paul said that the state of the world requires that all priests should imitate the pastor of Ars in making themselves “very available” for the Sacrament of Penance. He asked them to give it “priority over other activities” so that the faithful will realize the value attached to this “most difficult, the most delicate, the most taxing and the most demanding [priestly ministry] of all — especially when priests are in short supply.”
- G. Actions speak louder than words. We need to preach about confession by our body language, by our showing what a priority it is in our priesthood. We need to make it available.
- H. Benedict XVI during a 2007 meeting with the confessors of the Papal Basilicas, said: “How many penitents find in confession the peace and joy they were seeking for so long. Christ has chosen us, dear priests, to be the only ones with the power to pardon sins in his name. This then, is a specific ecclesial service to which we must give priority.”
- I. Paul VI: “Other works, for lack of time, may have to be postponed or even abandoned, but not the confessional.”
- J. JP II: “An unwillingness to welcome the wounded sheep, and even to go out to them in order to bring them back into the fold, would be a sad sign of a lack of pastoral sensibility in those who, by priestly Ordination, must reflect the image of the Good Shepherd.”
- K. 2001 Letter. “At the same time, let us make every effort to be true ministers of mercy. We know that in this sacrament, as in others, we are called to be agents of a grace which comes not from us but from on high and works by its own inner power. In other words – and this is a great responsibility – God counts on us, on our availability and fidelity, in order to work his wonders in human hearts.”
- L. JP II in *Misericordia Dei*, instructed bishops, priests, and rectors of churches and shrines to: “...Periodically verify that the greatest possible provision is in fact being made for the faithful to confess their sins. It is particularly recommended that in places of worship confessors be visibly present at the advertised times, that these times be adapted to the real circumstances of penitents, and that confessions be especially available before Masses, and even during Mass if there are other priests available, in order to meet the needs of the faithful.”
- M. Is there a good reason why we can’t hear confessions every day?
1. I’ve started it six days a week. I’m getting regular penitents who are growing. I’m getting big fish, too.
- N. Be creative in campaigns:

1. JP II in *Novo Milenio Ineunte* calls us to have “courage, confidence, creativity and perseverance in presenting it and leading people to appreciate the sacrament.
 2. Reconciliation weekend in Diocese of Fall River. Tried in Philadelphia and St. Louis.
 3. “Light is on for You” in DC and Baltimore. Advent in Boston. Similarly in San Antonio.
 4. 24 hours of confession recently in Manhattan.
 5. Rockville Center and Brooklyn, 6 hours on Monday of Holy Week.
 6. Opening up in malls.
- IX. 9. He helped people make a good confession.
- A. By his contagious holiness, which not only drew people to the sacrament but helped them to be honest.
 1. People came to Ars precisely because they thought they could encounter “God in a man.”
 2. Otherwise, why would people wait 8 days, sleep outside in cemeteries or meadows, all for a few minutes? They knew he was a saint and wanted to experience God’s holiness. They knew it would be a sacrament, a means by which they would encounter God. Helped to make them patient for long waits.
 3. The holiness of the priest matters: JP II 1986 Letter: “In a word, John Mary Vianney sanctified himself so as to be more able to sanctify others. Of course, conversion remains the secret of hearts, which are free in their actions, and the secret of God's grace. By his ministry, the priest can only enlighten people, guide them in the internal forum and give them the sacraments. The sacraments are of course actions of Christ, and their effectiveness is not diminished by the imperfection or unworthiness of the minister. But the results depend also on the dispositions of those who receive them, and these are greatly assisted by the personal holiness of the priest, by his perceptible witness, as also by the mysterious exchange of merits in the Communion of Saints. John Mary Vianney in a sense wished to force God to grant these graces of conversion, not only by his prayer but by the sacrifice of his whole life. He wished to love God for those who did not love him, and even to do the penance which they would not do. He was truly a pastor completely at one with his sinful people.”
 4. Except in special cases of a general confession, he was expeditious, like five minutes.
 - B. Examination
 1. He would fill in some of the gaps, by a special charism.
 2. To a priest who said, “But my intentions are good,” he responded, “O my friend, good intentions! Hell is paved with them!”
 - C. Contrition
 1. Once a penitent who was confessing his sins matter-of-factly without sorrow was startled when the Curé began to sob. “Why are you crying?,” the man asked. “I am weeping because you are not,” the Curé responded.
 2. To see JV weeping for their sins brought them to repentance. So many left in sobs and cries.
 3. One parochial vicar said, “Every one of my accusations provoked on his part this exclamation of faith, commiseration and horror for the smallest sin: “What a pity” I was particularly struck by the accent of tenderness with which he uttered the words. That simply “what a pity!” in all its beauty showed what damage sin had done to our soul.”
 4. In addition to words, there were his tears. To soften a hardened heart, it was enough for him to point, in the midst of his tears, to the crucifix that hung on the wall.
 5. His sighs and groans that escaped him against his will moved the penitent to repentance and love.
 6. “Save your poor soul! What a pity to lose a soul that has cost our Lord so much. What harm then has he done to you that you treat him thus!”
 7. “You have a vice that will be to your damnation — pride.”
 - D. Medicinal Penance and Firm Resolution
 1. Despite the rigorism of the day in most confessionals in France, he tried to be gentle. For others, people would need to return to confession several times. Convinced of the “misery of man,” he showed him profound pity.

2. He insisted, however, on adequate conversion. He would be rigorous on imposing the necessary sacrifices to eliminate near occasions. He had a Paris woman burn all her bad books before absolution.
 3. One woman, "Your confession would be useless. I can read in your soul and there I see ... the devil of pride and the devil of impurity. I can only absolve you on the condition you do not go back to Paris, and seeing your dispositions, I know that you will return there."
 4. "Unless you avoid such an occasion, if you persist in such a habit, if you do not follow such and such advice, you will be damned."
 5. "My friend, come back and talk to me tomorrow. In the meantime go before the altar of St. Philomena and tell her to ask our Lord for your conversion." He ended up meeting with him for 9 days and turned him, an atheistic philosopher, into one of the most fervent believers in Lyons.
- E. He said to Frère Athanase, "I am accused of being somewhat easy with certain pilgrims. Surely I must take into account the trouble it costs them to come from so far and the expense to which they are put. There are those who come secretly and who do not wish to be recognized; these are in a great hurry to leave."
- F. Exceedingly gentle in the application of sacramental penance. "They reproach me with it, but can I really be hard on people who come from so far, and who, in order to do so, have made so many sacrifices?"
- G. "Were I to impose severer penances, I should discourage them."
- H. One priest asked, "How can we strike a happy middle course in this matter?" "My friend, here is my recipe: I give them a small penance and the remainder I myself perform in their stead."
- I. He knew that penances needed to be medicinal. He had a great ability to touch the weak spot, to correct the defect.
1. With young people who could be holy, he sought to undercut vanity, unconscious pride, and self-love.
 2. He tested one future nun's humility, commanding her to kneel on the steps of the Church, with her arms extended crosswise as people were leaving Church.
 3. To men who wanted to be respected, he told them to go pray publicly in the Church. He had them praying the rosary aloud with fervor, to carry the rosary and to use it. "My friend, a good Christian is always armed with the rosary: mine never leaves me; go and buy one." Often he'd give them out.
 4. To one man, he gave acts of faith, hope and love. But then he made him walk in the Corpus Christi in his home town behind the canopy. The man testified in the cause for canonization, "Were I to live a hundred years, I should never forget those two hours spent by me walking behind the canopy. Cold perspiration bathed my forehead; my knees shook under me." But he was encouraged by other Catholics. Two years later, he had become a fearless Christian, he found himself as the mead of a St. Vincent de Paul conference.
- X. 10. He made people apostles of the confessional to others
- A. Story of the women began to spread word that there was something special about the way their pastor heard confession. Soon others from the village began to come to find out for themselves. Penitents would say that he had read their souls, told them with precision how long it had been since their last confession, and what sins they had forgotten to confess. The experience transformed Ars one reconciled soul at a time.
 - B. After Ars residents started to inform their relatives and friends in other villages about their ascetic and prayerful pastor's special gifts in the Sacrament of Penance, the road to Ars became the road to Damascus.
 - C. JP II (DM): "Confession is perhaps the most effective way for a Catholic to recover the lost sheep all around him, the millions of erring Catholics, your relatives and friends who are normally only one good confession away from reconciliation with Christ and the Church. You can be the instrument of God to bring them back; they will be eternally grateful. Start accepting yourself this great gift from God that is the Sacrament of Reconciliation."

- D. “Do you know anyone who needs the sacrament like you do? One way to thank God would be simply to tell them how happy you are you finally went back and encourage them to bring another.”
- E. Survey at St. Anthony’s brought so many back. Here were some of the responses:
 - 1. They don’t think they need confession.
 - 2. They fear what a priest might think of them.
 - 3. Some fear being in a dark box.
 - 4. “Other people may hear you.”
 - 5. They fear a priest may tell others their sins.
 - 6. They don’t know what to do.
 - 7. They lack the firm purpose of amendment to stop sinning.
 - 8. They’re afraid to examine their consciences.
 - 9. They have had a bad experience.
 - 10. They think it’s been too long.
- F. Used Boston Catholic Men’s Conference and Women’s Conference responses a few years back to show people the joy of confession.

XI. Conclusions

- A. We’re now in the novena for divine mercy. God is giving us so many signs of his desire for a revitalization of the sacrament
 - 1. Divine Mercy devotion
 - 2. Pauline year, which is a year of being reconciled to God.
 - 3. Year of the Priesthood, with JV as patron, is meant to give a rebirth to the role of confession in the life of a priest. It can not just be 45 minutes a week.
- B. Remember what Christ did as one of his first acts after rising from the dead: establish the sacrament of confession.
- C. We are faced with lots of challenges, but our situation can’t be as intimidating as Ars. God can transform it through one priest who says yes, who has perseverance, who has the proper priorities.
- D. Reconciliation and Penance 29. “But I also wish to pay homage to the innumerable host of holy and almost always anonymous confessors to whom is owed the salvation of so many souls who have been helped by them in conversion, in the struggle against sin and temptation, in spiritual progress and, in a word, in achieving holiness. I do not hesitate to say that even the great canonized saints are generally the fruit of those confessionals, and not only the saints but also the spiritual patrimony of the Church and the flowering of a civilization permeated with the Christian spirit! Praise then to this silent army of our brothers who have served well and serve each day the cause of reconciliation through the ministry of sacramental Penance!”
- E. There’s nothing to stop us from being numbered among them.