I. Confession -

A. Scriptural Reference: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained," (Jn. 20: 23).

In this Easter Sunday resurrection account of Jesus to His Apostles, Jesus appears to them behind lock doors. He offers them His peace twice and shows them His wounds on His hands and side. Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." And when He said this He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained," (Jn. 20: 21-3). It is through the power of the Holy Spirit, given to the Apostle by Jesus, that the Apostles are empowered by God to forgive sins. The Apostles, in their turn, laid their hands on other men and ordained them, imparting the Holy Spirit. And these men where then also empowered to forgive sins. Catholic Bishops for 2000 yrs., have been laying their hands on men, ordaining them and imparting the Holy Spirit.

B. How to prepare to make a good Confession –

Prior to making a good confession one should ask the Holy Spirit for His help to remember all our sins. The Holy Spirit will convict us of our sins, and then encourage us to go to confession to seek spiritual healing. The Holy Spirit has the ‘Sword of Truth;’ it is a two edge sword with one edge that cuts us to the marrow but with the other edge, the Sword of Truth brings healing. There are pamphlets known as ‘Examination of Conscience’ that help prepare the penitent to know their sins. These Examination of Conscience papers review the Ten Commandments and explain vices in relations to virtues that help us to understand our sins. A good Examination of Conscience sheet has many sins on it that help the penitent to know his sins prior to going to confession. It is best to prepare well, to know your sins prior to going to confession.

The acts of the penitent in Confession: examination of conscience, contrition (a sorrow or repentance for sins), confession (which consists in telling one sins to the priest), and satisfaction (carrying out a certain act of penance which the confessor imposes upon the penitent to repair damages caused by sin, (ref. Comp. C.C.C., no. 303).

The Sacrament of Confession washes away our sins in the Blood of Christ poured upon us by absolution. The person who desires to be set free from his sins should confess all sins, mortal and venial, clearly and sincerely. He needs to have contrition or sorry that is true and genuine. He should mention the mortal sins at the very beginning of the confession and not half-concealing them midst a multitude of venial sins. The confession of serious sins is the only ordinary way to obtain forgiveness. He should state in all sincerity and humility the number and species of these sins. The penitent above all must have a deep sorrow for sin together with a firm purpose of avoiding in the future, not only the sins themselves, but also their occasions and causes. Once
these sins have been forgiven, he must keep within his soul an abiding and lively sense of sorrow and a sincere and mortified life, by an ardent and self-sacrificing love.

**C. Effects of the Sacrament of Confession:**
Baptism does not abolish the weakness of human nature nor the inclination to sin (that is concupiscence). We suffer still from an unholy attraction to sin. Christ instituted this Sacrament for the conversion of the baptized who have been separated from Him by sin. This continual need of conversion is an obligation of all the faithful, (ref. Comp. C.C.C., no. 297-9).

There are several names for the Sacrament of Confession: the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of Forgiveness or the Sacrament of Conversion, (Comp. C.C.C, no. 296).

The faithful are obliged to confess mortal sins at least once a year and always before receiving Holy Communion. The confession of venial sins often is strongly recommended by the Church, because it helps us to form a correct conscience and to fight against evil tendencies. It allows us to be healed by Christ and to progress in the life of the Spirit.

Priests are bound to absolute secrecy concerning the sins revealed to him in confession by penitents. This secrecy is known as ‘the sacramental seal.’ Some priests have been put to death because they have not revealed sins of a penitent, St. John Damascene is an example.

The Effects of the Sacrament confession:
1.) Reconciliation with God, and therefore the forgiveness of sins
2.) Reconciliation with the Church;
3.) Recovery of the state of grace (if it has been lost)
4.) Remission of the eternal punishment merited by mortal sins, and remission, at least in part, of the temporal punishment which is the consequence of sin
5.) Peace, serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation
6.) An increase of spiritual strength for the struggle of Christian living, (Comp. C.C.C., no. 310).

**D. Dangers of a Poor Confession:**
Sometimes penitents are too embarrassed to confess certain sins (perhaps of a sexual nature) that the Holy Spirit has revealed to them. If one intentional hides sins during a confession they make the confession null and void, as if they never went to confession in the first place. It is of the utmost importance to confess all the sins that the Holy Spirit has reveal. One should confess the most difficult sins first (usually the mortal sins), so that one may not forget the difficult sins or lack the courage to confess them toward the end of the confession.
II. Anointing of the Sick –

A. Scriptural References: “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord,” (Jam. 5: 14). The presbyter is a scriptural name of the Catholic priest of the first few centuries. When the priest prays over him, by laying on his hands, through the Holy Spirit the person comes to healing. What healing is needed for the person at that time? A spiritual, emotional, or physical healing? God knows. And Jesus works through His priest to bring healing to those who are in need of healing. Jesus’ compassion for the sick was evident in His many healing of the infirmed. In Jesus the Kingdom of God had come and therefore the victory over sin, over suffering and over death. By His passion and death He gave new meaning to our suffering which, when united with His own suffering becomes a means of purification and of salvation for us and for others, (Comp. C.C.C., no. 314).

B. The celebration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:

Only a priest or bishop can celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Any member of the faithful can receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick when they are physically or emotionally sick, or begin to be in the danger of death because of a sickness or old age. The faithful can receive it several times if their illness persists.

The Sacrament is preceded by individual confession on the part of the sick person, (Comp. C.C.C., no. 316). And Holy Communion can also be given to the person close to death; this is called Viaticum. The Viaticum is the final Holy Communion that prepares the person for death and the journey to eternal life. Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ who died and rose from the dead, received at the moment of passing from this world to the Father, is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection, (Comp. C.C.C., no. 320).

A sick person desiring to receive this Sacrament will have the priest lay his hands on them, and he will pray in silence, asking for God’s grace to bring healing. The priest will then anoint the forehead and then the palm of the hands of the sick person while reciting a brief prayer. If the person is indeed in danger of death the priest prays Apostolic Pardon prayer to relieve the person from any temporal punishment due to their sins. God is a merciful and just God. We owe God a debt of justice for our sins. This debt of justice is paid with the temporal punishment due to our sins. The Apostolic Pardon relieves the person of the debt of his sins from that moment backward. If one died shortly after receiving the Anointing of the Sick he would only need to pay for the sins from that moment until his death. Calling the priest to the bedside of your beloved sick, allows the dying person to receive the Anointing of the Sick and helps them to come quickly into the embrace of Our Lord after their death. They are not burdened by the debt of a heavy weight of a lifetime of sins.
C. Effects of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick:
This Sacrament confers a special grace, which unites the sick person more intimately to the Passion of Christ. It gives comfort, peace, courage and even the forgiveness of sins if the sick person is not able to make a confession. Sometimes, if it is the will of God, this Sacrament even brings about the restoration of physical health. In any case this Anointing prepares the sick person for the journey to the Father’s house, (ref. Comp. C.C.C., no. 319).

Questions & Sharing:
1.) Do Catholics have to go to Confession to receive forgiveness from God?
Yes, the Second Precept of the Church says that we are to go to Confession, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year, during Lent or Easter season, (ref. Comp. of the C.C.C., # 432). Following this precept will allow you to fulfill the Third Precept of the Church: receive the Eucharist at once a year during the Easter Season. Going to Confession is the ordinary means made available to the faithful to receive the sacramental grace of the forgiveness of sins. Mortal sins are only forgiven through the Sacrament of Confession. Although only once a year is required to follow the Precepts of the Church, Catholics who want to avail themselves to the merciful love of Our Lord more often then just once a year are encouraged to go several times a year. Going once a month or even every two weeks would be a good faith-filled exercise for one who was interested in growing in faith. Remember we encounter the living Jesus Christ in the confessional; He is the merciful Lamb of God with the gift of His love, mercy and forgiveness waiting for you.

2.) Why do the Protestant Churches not have Confession?
Our separated brethren Christian Churches do not have apostolic succession. Their ministers do not have a lineage back to the Apostles, where bishops laid hands upon them from the apostolic times, from the Church that Jesus, Himself founded. Therefore, they lack validly ordained priests that are necessary to have confession. No priest... no Confession... no Eucharist. This is one very important reason that we need to pray for vocations to the priesthood. Some of these other Christian Church only have two valid Sacraments: Baptism (when water is used with the Trinitarian formula) and Marriage (mutual consent given between a Christian man and a Christian woman).

3.) Is it necessary to receive the Anointing of the Sick to go to heaven?
It is not; however, the Anointing of the Sick is the ordinary means by which the faithful are well prepared to encounter the Just Judge, Jesus the Lord after our death. We understand that it is wrong to think that God only working within His Sacraments. He impart His grace as He sees fit. But we are confident that through His Sacraments He is preparing us to come to our salvation. And without the Sacraments it is much more difficult, if not impossible as a Catholic to go to heaven.
4.) Why are people sometimes afraid to receive the Anointing of the Sick? People think that the Anointing of the Sick is a Sacrament of death, once you receive you will die. This is untrue. The Anointing of the Sick is a Sacrament of healing. Sometimes immediately after receiving the anointing of the sick, Our Lord will take the person to Himself through death, for the person is well prepared to encounter Him at death. However, many times, the Lord will bring healing that restores the person to physical health. We should not be fearful to receive anyone of the Sacraments; we remember that each of them is an encounter with Jesus Our Lord. Sometime the evil one will play on our fears and keep one away from the Sacraments. We remember that we are in a battle for our souls and we need all the means available to us to fight this battle and strengthen us. So we receive the Sacraments.

5.) What are indulgences? Indulgences are the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. The faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains the indulgence under prescribed conditions for either himself or the departed. Indulgences are granted through the ministry of the Church, which as the dispenser of the grace of redemption distributes the treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints.