Welcome! The purpose of this course is to develop the pastoral competence necessary for a priest effectively to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with an individual penitent, and in particular to foster appropriate application of the principles of Christian living to the concrete situation of the penitent. It thus presupposes that substantial courses have been completed in fundamental moral theology, justice, sexual ethics, pastoral counseling, canon law, sacramental theology and celebrational style (the actual liturgy and rubrics of the sacrament), and in particular that the student has a thorough understanding of the basic principles of Roman Catholic moral theology in the teleological tradition of Aquinas, including the dynamics of the virtues, of intentionality, and of the "objectivity" of moral action.

The course will regularly involve "role-playing" in which the student will confront paradigmatic situations relevant to social justice, justice in the workplace, restitution, healthcare ethics, marriage and the family, and sexuality as well as these and other situations involving cooperation with and appropriation of evil; discussions which will unfold the principles operative in the role-playing scenarios; and discussions of more general issues bearing on successful celebration of the sacrament. The role-playing will be presented by guest instructors who will act as penitents. Enrollment is limited to six students.

The requirement of the course is: the desire to learn as manifested in

1) Attendance at each and every class session;

2) a palpable willingness to participate fully in the role-playing and discussions;

3) the ability to discuss controverted issues with openness and with respect for those who express opinions with which one may disagree;

4) the ability to integrate into the discussions the readings that will be assigned in preparation for some of the sessions;

5) the ability to maintain the strict confidentiality of the role plays and the discussions that follow;

6) willingness to participate in a short evaluation session with the instructor during the last week of the semester (if the instructor believes that such a session may be useful).
(NOTE: credit for the course is dependent upon students attending all of the class sessions; exceptions will be granted only on account of illness or similar emergencies (not because of pastoral, communal, academic, or personal commitments, travel, etc).

With successful completion of this course, the will be able to serve as an effective sign of Christ's merciful judgment as you celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which will involve, among other skills, knowledge of the proper role of the confessor in the formation of conscience; the ability to help the penitent prudently apply the principles of Roman Catholic moral theology to, and to assess subjective responsibility in, his or her concrete situation (as well as to suggest appropriate penances); the expertise to recognize the difference between religious scrupulosity and psychological obsession, and to respond to both appropriately; the power to create a safe setting for the penitent, and to listen attentively and with discernment; a sensitivity to the penitent's cultural location; knowledge of important canonical issues as they apply to the sacrament; and awareness of the necessity of absolute discretion with regard to all things pertaining to the sacramental revelation of conscience. This course will also foster your ability to collaborate with others in this learning process, as we jointly discuss the role-plays and learn from the insights of others. It will foster as well your ability to think integrally, as you bring to bear your theological studies on complex practical situations.

Instructor Edward Krasevac, O.P.

Office Addresses: DSPT, 2301 Vine Street, East Building, Second Floor, Room 200

Email & Telephone Contacts: ekrasevac@dspt.edu, 510-883-2082

Office Hours: Mondays 9:45-10:45 and Thursdays, 9:30-10:30, and most Tuesday and Wednesday mornings (call ahead/email to confirm).

Please check your email on a daily basis; this is the primary way in which we will communicate with you regarding changes of reading assignments or in the event a class has to be canceled due to illness. If your email address changes during the semester, please notify the instructor immediately.

Class are not held during Reading Week (10/27& 10/30).

There is no Reader for this course.

If you will need special arrangements for meeting course requirements for reasons of documented disability, please speak to the instructor early in the term so that arrangements can be anticipated and arranged. Students who have trouble climbing the stairs to my office may meet with me in a designated ADA room on the first level of the East Building.
"Matters of practical conduct have nothing invariable about them, any more than matters of health. . . . They require human beings to consider what is appropriate to specific circumstances and to the specific occasion. [Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* II.ii.3-4]

Disquisitions on general morality are not entirely trustworthy, and the ground becomes more uncertain when one wishes to descend to individual cases in detail. The factors are infinitely variable, and cannot be settled either by art of precedent. Judgement should be left to the people concerned. Each must set himself to act according to the immediate situation and the circumstances involved. The decision may be unerring in the concrete, despite the uneasy debate in the abstract. Nevertheless, the moralist can provide some help and direction in such cases. [Thomas Aquinas, In *II Ethics*, lect. 2]

"The immediate criterion for concrete ethical action is solely the imperative of prudence in the person who has the decision to make. This standard cannot be abstractly construed or even calculated in advance; abstractly here means: outside the particular situation. The imperative of prudence is always and in essence a decision regarding an action to be performed in the 'here and now.' By their very nature such decision can be made only by the person confronted with decision. No one else can make them in his stead. . . . The statements of moral theology, including those of casuistry, necessarily remain general. They can never take hold of a real and whole 'here and now.' . . ." [Joseph Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 27-8]

"If you want to play football well, you will, let us suppose, make use of two books. The first is written by an experienced coach and tells you what the good and bad moves are in the game and now to practice the former and avoid the latter. It aims to help you acquire certain football skills. Learning such skills does not consist in understanding and remembering what you have read in this training manual; for football is not a theoretical but a practical skillXit can only be learnt by long practice guided by the manual. In fact, as you become more skilled you will refer less and less to the manual. Moreover, if you become expert you may, on occasion, recognize that the really excellent move would involve doing just what, in the manual, you were told never to do. . . ."

"Besides the training manual, however, you will also need another book: you will need the rule book. This will tell you, amongst other things, what moves count as fouls. A foul is a bad or forbidden move, but it is not playing football badly: it is not playing football at all, but pretending to. . . . The rule book does not tell you anything about acquiring skills in football; it simply tells you the rules and the kinds of action that would break them. At crucial points it is essential to know what is fair play and what is foul; and this is a fairly simple matter of information. The mere spectator can know this just as well as the most expert player. The rule book defines the context within which we may become skilled players: it is no way helps us to do so." [Herbert McCabe, O.P., "Manuals and Rule Books," *The Tablet*, 18 Dec 2003, 27-8]

The place of [individual] confession in [the development of moral theology] has historically influenced the subject in three ways: a preoccupation with sin; a concentration on the individual; and an obsession with law. . . . As a consequence of this commitment to spiritual pathology, the discipline of moral theology was to relinquish almost all consideration of the good in man to other branches of theology, notably to what became known as spiritual theology. [John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 31]

[The requirement of diligence in the examination of conscience and the confession of sins in their number, species, and circumstances] led also to an approach to the moral life as discontinuous; 'freezing' the film in a jerky succession of individual 'stills' to be analyzed, and ignoring the plot. Continuity was discounted, or at most only a 'circumstance', and the 'story' of the individual's moral vocation and exploration either unsuspected or disregarded. [John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology*, 31]

"Since in the judicial court of Penance God HimselfXthe searcher of heartsXis the principal judge, and the purpose of this judgment is to reconcile and free the sinner, it is not necessary that the confessor himself be perfectly aware of the sins of the penitent. Therefore in a case of extreme necessity either a generic accusation or no accusation whatsoever is sufficient for receiving absolution." [Dominic Prummer, O.P., *Handbook on Moral Theology*, 293]

Fanaticism is always a compensation for hidden doubt. (Carl Jung, "Analytical Psychology and Education," 1924)
GENERAL DISCUSSION OF PRELIMINARY ISSUES

8 Classes: September 4th – September 29th

What follows presupposes that students have studied the sacramental, liturgical, and ritual aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as well as the sacramental and canonical aspects of marriage. In particular, students should be familiar with the "Introduction to the Rite of Penance" in the Roman Ritual, especially numbers 6-21 (online at: http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/FuseAction/DocumentContents/Index/2/SubIndex/40/DocumentIndex/446). Various other short readings (not listed below) will be made available during the course of the semester relevant to particular topics. We will cover the preliminary issues seriatim in the first eight classes; the amount of time allotted to each will vary.

INTRODUCTION

Dynamics of this course / confidentiality of material discussed / listening and responding respectfully to each other, and the process of learning / the prudential application of moral principles and the concreteness of moral judgment (see quotations above)

Some issues in the history of the Sacrament / the ups and downs of "private" confession

The purpose of the sacrament and the relation between compassion/forgiveness and judgment / implications of the presupposition that people are moved by grace to come to the sacrament, an in particular Aquinas' theory that normally contrition (which blots out sin) occurs before the penitent approaches the sacrament, but always in view of the sacrament / the concept of "binding," and the withholding or deferring of absolution / contrition, confession and absolution / implications of contrition for avoidance of the occasion of sin and restitution / formal and material integrity of the sacrament / questioning of the penitent

The process of moral development and the gradual nature of conversion / the grace-nature relation and limitations of nature

Creating a safe "space" for the penitent / listening to what is really being said and confessed

The seal, and the necessity of discretion concerning every aspect of the sacramental manifestation of conscience / faculties

    KPages 132-34 (one page white handout) from John Huels, The Pastoral Companion on the seal of confession
    KOne page grey handout on acts of the penitent, absolution, and the seal of confession
    KNine page pink handout on "Contritionism and Attritionism" and texts from Aquinas on contrition
    KOne page green handout on "Characteristics of Casuistry in its Later (decadent) Period (after 1700) (one side) and the "The Historical Consequences of Individual Confession" (other side)
    KServais Pinckaers, The Sources of Christian Ethics, pp. 359-71, on the three stages of moral development
    KFour pages of orange handouts on Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive Development theory
    KBernard Haring, Shalom: Peace, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, pp. 77-85 (absolution) / 111-117 (integrity)

    ASuggested Reference: Canons 965-991 and 1387-88 of the Code of Canon Law (available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/)

    ASuggested Reference: Article on "Penance" by Karl Rahner in Rahner's The Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, "C" ("The Teaching of the Fathers") to end, on the history of the sacrament
QUESTIONS OF SCRUPULOSITY, COMPULSION, AND DEPENDENCE
How to recognize and approach these patterns of behavior / how to differentiate psychological pathology from religious scrupulosity, and deal with both / situations in which authority must be strongly exercised

**KBlue** handout on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder & Scrupulosity from Joseph Ciarrocchi, *The Doubting Disease*

AUTHORITY, CONSCIENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE CONFESSOR
The role of the confessor with regard to the formation of conscience / caution with regard to confessors imposing their personal views, theologies, interpretations or spiritualities on others in the name of Church / invincible ignorance as an aspect of contemporary secular culture / how to approach penitents who disagree with the teaching of the Church / levels of authority and the hierarchy of truths / Examination of conscience in light of virtues or Decalogue?

**KBright green** handout beginning "Listening for values" (one side) and perplexity (other side)

MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN / ASSESSING RESPONSIBILITY
Discussion of the classical distinction / sins of weakness versus sins of malice / discussion of issues surrounding "modifiers of responsibility" that diminish subjective responsibility (including awareness of psychological and sociological factors) / finding balance between rigorism and denial of freedom/responsibility / how to supportively and compassionately push "people" forward and recognize the degree to which they are capable of being pushed / the dynamics of habit and vice, and pastoral response to freely rejected habits

**KBernard Haring**, *Shalom: Peace, the Sacrament of Reconciliation*, pp. 145-147 / 163-165

MORAL PRINCIPLES USEFUL TO THE CONFESSOR
The indirectly voluntary / the appropriateness of traditional "reflex principles" / principles of toleration, cooperation and appropriation

**KPages** on the "fonts of morality" and "indirect" intentionality

**KA** number of multi-colored pages on the Principles of Cooperation and Appropriation (and scandal)

**KOne page red** handout on pastoral solutions in the internal forum

**KArticle** by Walter Kasper, "Merciful God, Merciful Church," raising questions about the divorced and remarried

**KOne heavy-stock** page entitled "Some Principles/Rules of Thumb for Confessors"

CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE SACRAMENT
Influence of cultural factors (Hispanic & Vietnamese in particular) on a penitent's understanding of sin and the role of the priest


**KEric H. F. Law**, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed*, pp. 100-106

PENANCES AND THEIR APPLICATION
The role of penances / how should the penance "fit" the sin? / understanding and acceptance of penances / prayer as a "penance"? / the "temporal punishment due to sin"

**KThree page goldenrod** handout on "satisfaction," temporal punishment due to sin, and the forms of theological fear

**KThree page cream** handout on indulgences” "Indulgentiarum Doctrina" and "Indulgences"

**KPages** 132-34 (one page **white** handout) from John Huels, *The Pastoral Companion* on abortion

**KTwo page article** entitled "The Floating Sacrament: Not a Reset Button," by Thomas L. Kuhman
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<td>Professor Marga Vega</td>
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