

# CEFT 2000: Confessional Ministry

DSPT: Fall, 2018. Classroom is #3 on top floor of West Building (Corner of Vine & Arch)

Note: Green Superscripts refer to DSPT Institutional Goals and MDiv Program Outcomes: see last page

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. <sup>DIV06</sup>

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 one requirement for the course is: *the desire to learn* as manifested in

- 1) Attendance at each and every class session; <sup>IG4</sup>
- 2) a palpable willingness to participate fully in the role-playing and discussions; <sup>IG4</sup>
- 3) *the ability to discuss controverted issues with openness and with respect for those who express opinions with which one may disagree;* <sup>IG2</sup>
- 4) the ability to integrate into the discussions the readings that will be assigned in preparation for some of the sessions; <sup>IG1</sup>
- 5) *the ability to maintain strict confidentiality of the role plays and the discussions that follow;* <sup>IG4</sup>
- 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). <sup>IG2</sup>

***(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;<sup>DIV04</sup> a sensitivity to the penitent's cultural location;<sup>DIV07</sup> 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.<sup>DIV04</sup> 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.<sup>IG4</sup> It will foster as well your ability to think integrally, as you bring to bear your theological studies on complex practical situations.<sup>IG1/DIV06</sup>

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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Thursdays 9:40-10:40, 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 (10/22 & 10/25).

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.*

## Texts for Reflection

"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, *Nicomachean 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 skill—it 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 Himself—the searcher of hearts—is 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

7 Classes: September 8<sup>th</sup> – September 29<sup>th</sup>

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 already 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 on previous page)

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, and 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 / creating a safe "space" for the penitent / listening "through" the penitent's words to discern what is really being expressed and confessed

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

- ◆ One half page **blue** handout from Pinckaers and one **white** *index card* on Interior Acts and types of fear
- ◆ One-page **green** handout on "The Historical Consequences of Individual Confession" & "Characteristics of Casuistry in its Later (decadent) Period" and ◆ one **blue** page of quotes from James Keenan and second **blue** page on Nominalism. (*review of some principles from CE 2045*)
- ◆ Four-page **pink** handout on "Contritionism and Attritionism" and five **pink** pages of texts from Aquinas
- ◆ One-page **white** handout on the relation between forgiveness and absolution
- ◆ One-page **white** handout on memory by Dale Allison
- ◆ Bernard Haring, *Shalom: Peace, the Sacrament of Reconciliation*, pp. 77-85 (absolution) / 111-117 (integrity)
- ◆ One-page **grey** handout on acts of the penitent, absolution, and the seal of confession
- ◆ Pages 132-34 (one-page **white** handout) from John Huels, *The Pastoral Companion* on the seal of confession
  - Λ Suggested Reference: Canons 965-991 and 1387-88 of the *Code of Canon Law* (available online at <http://www.vatican.va/archive/>)
  - Λ Suggested 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
- ◆ One **bright green** page in a transparency entitled "Some Principles/Rules of Thumb for Confessors"

## 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

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

## 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 / the irony of the exercise of unquestioned authority in these situations. The larger context of the grace/nature relationship and the effects of personality and pathology on responsibility.

- ◆ **Blue** handout on Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder & Scrupulosity from Joseph Ciarrocchi, *The Doubting Disease*
- ◆ **White** four-page handout on personality disorders

## THE PROCESS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE GRADUAL NATURE OF CONVERSION / CULTURAL INFLUENCES OF PENITENTS / the grace-nature relation and limitations inherent in nature (*review and discussion of some principles from CE 2045*) /

- ◆ Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, pp. 359-71, on the three stages of moral development with one **white** page synthesis of Pinckaers on moral development.
- ◆ Four pages of **orange** handouts on Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive Development theory

## AUTHORITY, CONSCIENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE CONFESSOR / CULTURAL FACTORS

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?

- ◆ Combustible **orange** page, "Some Issues of Relevance in Considering Authoritative Church Teaching"
- ◆ Bright **green** handout beginning "Listening for values" (one side) and perplexity (other side)
- ◆ Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dance with the Lamb*, pp. 19-21 / 24 / 29-35 only
- ◆ Eric H. F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing but Not Consumed*, pp. 102-105

## MORAL PRINCIPLES USEFUL TO THE CONFESSOR (*includes review of some principles from CE 2045*)

The indirectly voluntary / the appropriateness of traditional "reflex principles" / principles of toleration, cooperation and appropriation / discussion of counseling the "lesser evil"

- ◆ Pages on the "fonts of morality" and "indirect" intentionality
- ◆ A number of multi-colored pages on the Principles of Cooperation and Appropriation (and scandal)
- ◆ One **white** page entitled THE "LESSER EVIL"
- ◆ One-page **red** handout on pastoral solutions in the internal forum
- ◆ Article by Walter Kasper, "Merciful God, Merciful Church," raising questions about the divorced and remarried

## 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"

- ◆Three-page **goldenrod** handout on "satisfaction," temporal punishment due to sin, and the forms of theological fear
- ◆Three-page **cream** handout on indulgences" "Indulgentiarum Doctrina" and "Indulgences"
- ◆Pages 138-143 (**yellow** pages) from John Huels, *The Pastoral Companion* on canonical penalties and abortion (plus one white sheet with summary of penalties, entitled "E: Those Subject to Penalties")
- ◆Three pages from an article entitled "The Floating Sacrament: Not a Reset Button," by Thomas L. Kuhman

## DSPT Institutional Goals and MDiv Program Outcomes

### DSPT Institutional Goals (IG)

#### **Pedagogical Goal: Deep Learning**

Motivated by a thirst for truth, the disciplined inquirer is a life-long learner who recognizes fundamental principles in a given field of inquiry and applies them in creative or innovative ways to broader contemporary issues which are of importance to Church, the academy, and/or society. Disciplined inquiry includes the following characteristics:

1. *Integrative Thinking*: the ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments.
2. *Intellectual Humility*: an orientation of mind and heart that fosters intellectual collaboration, precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, and recognizes that contrary opinions are not a threat, but provide the opportunity to test and deepen one's own grasp of the truth.
3. *Self-Direction*: the disposition to take primary responsibility for one's own education, manifested in a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, and the ability to teach oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration.

#### **Vocational Goal: Collaborative Leadership**

A collaborative leader inspires within others the desire to realize the common good by articulating to academy or society a coherent vision rooted in the mission of the Church, all the while leading by example.

4. *Ability to Collaborate*: expressed in good listening and communication skills which foster decisions stemming from and leading to an open, transparent, and mutually enriching dialog with others in order that the gifts of all can be appropriately acknowledged and utilized.

### DSPT MDiv Program Outcomes (DIVO)

By the end of the program, students will demonstrate ministerial and pastoral competency through the ability:

1. to communicate simply, accurately, and effectively the theological tradition of the Roman Catholic Church through preaching, teaching, and writing;
2. to preach in a manner that is grounded in scholarly methods of biblical interpretation, and is doctrinally sound, pastorally focused, and rhetorically effective;
3. to analyze, assess, and critique theological perspectives through scriptural, historical, and systematic theological methods, and to assist others in doing the same;
4. to fulfill their responsibilities with the moral, intellectual, psychological, and emotional maturity that grounds vigorous discipleship of Christ and priestly service to others;
5. to lead a faith community in prayer, worship and theological reflection, centered on the Eucharist, respecting both the liturgical tradition of the Church and the pastoral needs of the local community;
6. to apply the principles of the moral theology of St. Thomas Aquinas to pastoral situations in general and confessional situations in particular;
7. to both lead and work collaboratively with others in a just, charitable, and generous manner, respecting the relevant cultural, social, and ecclesial circumstances, all the while maintaining professional, ethical boundaries;
8. to foster Church communion, demonstrated through personal and liturgical prayer, regular observance, and life in community.