

Dear Nicole,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked if it was wrong to confess your sins to a priest or should you confess them directly to Jesus?

God has afforded the great privilege of communion with him through prayer to all who have accepted his Son Jesus as their Lord and Savior and have made a covenant of sacrifice of their wills in order to follow Jesus' example in all aspects of their lives. It is through prayer that we are strengthened and comforted. Prayer is our lifeline to our Heavenly Father. It is the vehicle we use to praise Him, thank Him, and tell Him how much we love Him. In prayer we also come to the throne of heavenly grace to confess our sins and shortcomings and ask forgiveness. And, we are told, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

When Jesus walked the earth, God gave him the power through the Holy Spirit to read the hearts of men and forgive sins. But today, no human, priest included, has that power. Instead, we have an advocate, one who can and will intercede for us, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (1 John 2:1). "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

In addition to confessing our sins to our Father through the merit of Jesus, we are encouraged to confess our sins to one another so that we may pray for each other. "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed [healed from the spiritual sickness that sin causes]. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) Sin is damaging to the Christian. It causes us to feel guilty and unworthy of God's mercy and forgiveness. Healing is needed. That is why confession is so important. Since all of us are sinners and continue to sin even though we try not to, it is our duty and obligation to uplift our fellow Christians whose struggles with the flesh, the world, and the devil are the same as ours. And, just as our Father in heaven forgives us, we also need to forgive those who have sinned against us. Otherwise our sins will not be forgiven (Matthew 6:12-15). In essence, our Father forgives us if our hearts are contrite and forgiving of others.

Therefore, in answer to your question as to whether it is wrong to confess sins to a priest, we would reply that confession of sins to any person is not wrong since we are admonished to confess sins to one another in order to be healed. But, as to whether a priest can forgive sins or intercede for us, our answer, as explained above, is no.

We hope we have shed some light on your inquiry.  
Please write us again.