

What happens if you don't go to confession for years?

That would be sad not to go to confession for years, because God offers us such a wonderful gift of healing; it's a shame not to take advantage of it. Unfortunately, however, confession (also called the Sacrament of Penance, or Reconciliation) seems to have been set aside by many Catholics for a variety of reasons. We should go to confession often because it gives us six spiritual effects as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1496):

- 1. *reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace;***
- 2. *reconciliation with the Church;***
- 3. *remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins;***
- 4. *remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments resulting from sin;***
- 5. *peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation;***
- 6. *an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.***

Canon Law states: ***“After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year.”*** (Can. 989) This prescription applies strictly only to those in a state of mortal sin, but frequent confession is something that we should all strive for because we receive graces and strength that help us avoid committing sins in the future. Most priests I have talked to recommend that we go to confession at least once a month, even if we have not committed mortal sins.

If it has been several years since you have gone to confession, please make a commitment to go as soon as possible, especially if you have committed mortal sins. Examine your conscience, repent, pray for God's forgiveness, and make your confession. Then do not look back; your sins will be forgiven and a great weight will be lifted from your shoulders. Jesus says to you as He said to the woman in the gospel: ***“Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”*** (Jn. 8:11)

Deacon Joe