

Hard questions and hurts, honestly

“Lovest thou me?”

In short. The Church calls herself at once holy and always in need of purification, and says all her members, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners.¹ Because it is ultimately Christ who acts, the unworthiness of a minister does not prevent Christ from acting.²

Key points

- All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners.¹
- Ministers can leave human traces that are not always signs of fidelity to the Gospel.³
- The minister’s sin cannot impede the fruit of grace in the sacraments.³
- Peter denied Jesus and was restored with a threefold affirmation of love.⁴

Try this, this week

1. **Read John 21:1–19.** Notice that Jesus feeds Peter before he asks him anything.
2. **Write down the question or hurt** that keeps you away. Be as honest as you like.
3. **Look up what the Church teaches** about your question in the Catechism, not in headlines.
4. **Ask a priest for a conversation**, not confession, if that feels easier.

“And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter going out, wept bitterly.”

Luke 22:61–62, Douay–Rheims

Watch out: what this does not mean

- Acknowledging sin in the Church is part of her own teaching; she follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.¹
- The grace of the sacraments does not depend on the holiness of the minister, but other acts of ministers can harm the Church’s fruitfulness.³

Common questions

How can the Church be holy when people in it did terrible things?

The Church is holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace.¹ If her members move away from that life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity.¹

Are sacraments from a sinful priest still real?

The Church teaches that the unworthiness of the minister does not prevent Christ from acting.² Even the minister’s sin cannot impede the fruit of grace in the sacraments.³

Remember: Your hurt is real, and so is Christ’s mercy.

Sources

1. CCC 827
2. CCC 1584

3. CCC 1550
4. CCC 1429

Quotation above: Luke 22:61–62, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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