

Hard questions and hurts, honestly

“Do you have affection for 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.

“The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the Lord’s word, how he said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times.’ He went out, and wept bitterly.”

Luke 22:61–62, World English Bible

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?

Video answer: Bishop Robert Barron, stoneandincense.com/en/questions/why-trust-a-church-with-so-many-scandals/

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

What should priests be like?

Video answer: Fr. Mike Schmitz, stoneandincense.com/en/questions/what-should-priests-be-like/

The Catechism says the exercise of priestly authority must be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made Himself the least and the servant of all.⁵

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

Sources

1. CCC 827
2. CCC 1584
3. CCC 1550

4. CCC 1429
5. CCC 1551

Quotation above: Luke 22:61–62, World English Bible. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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