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The latest trends in reconciliation

Isabella R. Moyer | Aug. 16, 2012 NCR Today

The fact that many Catholics no longer partake of the sacrament of reconciliation is no secret. John Cornell is researching the present trends and shares some of his observations in a feature article [1] for *The Tablet*.

For those of us who were raised in the transitional years following Vatican II, the stories and images are familiar. Nervously standing in long lines outside confessionals on a Saturday morning. The haunting fear that missing Mass last Sunday will guarantee us an eternity of hell-fire. The shadowy face behind the screen with the impersonal, monotone voice (on a good day) or stern reprimands (on a bad day). Yes, I'm one of those 50 and over for whom "the experience of confession before Vatican II remains a troubled memory," according to Cornell. But I have also had some good experiences in the past.

I was discerning religious life in my younger years. At the time, I had a spiritual director who was both mentor and friend to me. After sharing and discussing my soul's journey, he would offer me the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament took on a new meaning when it followed an opening of the heart within a trusted and prayerful environment. It was a holistic approach to discerning both the graces and the sins in my life. The confession unfolded within a God-centered dialogue rather than in a rote recitation of failings.

John Cornell acknowledges that our experiences of the sacrament of penance are multifaceted and diverse. In association with *The Tablet* and as part of his book research, he invites us to share our own stories and experiences. He can be contacted via email at jc224@cam.ac.uk or in writing at John Cornwell, Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL.

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Links:
[1] http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/163100