

A confession to make

Maybe the new iPhone confession app. will help people prepare better for the sacrament of Penance. Obviously, it is not a substitute but a preparation manual to help Catholics examine their consciences more thoroughly.

Some years ago, a woman in England set up a web site that allowed people to get things off their chests. It served as an opportunity for people to “confess” their wayward ways without performing any penance or desire to amend their ways. On the site, people confessed to affairs, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity, stealing, etc. Real names were not divulged.

Some time ago, another similar web site was set up that continued the same process. It was called, “Secret Regrets” It asks the question, “What if you had a Second Chance?” The goal of the project is “to help people see how powerful ‘looking back’ can be as the first step in ‘moving forward’”

The blog that ensued led to a plethora of people sharing their many regrets. What made this blog different was that readers could also comment on people’s regrets. Such comments lead, not only to words of encouragement but also a very valuable support network of the hurt, the hurting and the healers.

The author of the blog found out a universal truth – “that no matter what you are facing in your life, you are not alone. Someone out there can relate to what you are going through – and may have made it through a similar situation. These people are not doctors, therapists, or other clinically trained professionals. Instead they are wives, husbands, girlfriends, boyfriends, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, bosses, co-workers, lovers and execs – real people with real life experiences and real life perspectives. They are sympathetic to what you are going through. And they want to help.”

Kevin Hansen, the creator of the blog, has now written a book that collected many of the contributions to the blog.

The first blog in the book is from a daughter. She writes as follows: “I regret all the praying that I’ve done to keep you on this earth, Mom. I know how much pain you’re in and how badly you want it all to stop. I know that you’d be better off in Heaven with God, I know. I regret my selfishness of wanting to keep you. I still don’t want God to take you, but would it be best? I need you Mom. Just stay a little while longer. Please, for me.”

Someone responded by telling the young woman about her own mother dying a few months ago and how she feels guilty and reminded her “don’t feel guilty for wanting your mother to continue living. Very few people on this planet feel any different in your situation.”

The second post is from a 20 year old female who says that she “regrets finding you on Facebook. Now I see your life without me every time you post a status update. Technology means never having to say goodbye forever.”

A two sentence post captures the cross of an unloved child. “I regret the fact that my mother aborted the other child and not me, and that every day I let her remind me of how big a mistake that was on her part.”

One person comments with a “regret” which is not really a regret. It is from a forty-one male who writes :”If I had a second chance to do ONE thing differently in my life, I would not change a single thing because I am constantly growing, and without my experiences I would not be who I am. I am coming through a time anyone would agree is a low time in my life. At first glance, I think, oh yes, I would change this and that...but with more contemplation I realize it has all been perfect. The abuse, the injuries, the cancer, all the pain and suffering were really perfect. Without my negative experiences I might have just bounced along so wrapped up in my thoughts and my ego that I missed what is really important: loving myself and serving others. Oh and let’s remember the past is just a thought. All there ever is, is this beautiful, amazing, perfect moment right now.”

Maybe there is a lot of truth to the saying, “confession is good for the soul,” whether it be in a real sacramental setting or in a secret regrets blog.