

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE EARLY CHURCH HISTORY ABOUT PRIESTS FORGIVING SINS

The Roman Catholic Church fibs that Jesus gave the priesthood the power to forgive sins. It uses a gospel verse to prove that. The story is that Jesus appeared a few days after his resurrection in a room to his disciples and gave them the authority. But the early Church clearly did not understand the episode the way the Church does.

The Faith of our Fathers says that Christians who are not Catholics but who believe that baptism forgives sins should be able to believe that priests forgive sins in confession (page 410). But baptism is not anybody claiming to have the power to forgive sins but asking God to forgive and wash away sin. Incredibly, Catholicism has the nerve to say what Faith of our Fathers says and refuses to reason that if anybody can forgive sins in baptism that means anybody can absolve sin not just priests.

If baptism forgives sin that does not imply confession can.

If the apostles and whoever else was in that room that day got the power to forgive sins that does not mean they could have passed that power on. There is no evidence that the infant Church practiced absolution – even Ignatius who wanted to put bishops on a pedestal never spoke of bishops being able to pardon sins. Such a doctrine would have been his delight.

Concerning John 20:23, “The persistent enquirer will draw attention to the lack of any evidence for the celebration of this sacrament until the third century and to its more frequent celebration only beginning with the practice of Irish monks in the sixth. The words in the Gospel are then interpreted as referring far more naturally to the administration of baptism by which sins are forgiven and people are reconciled to God. In the context it is difficult to see how else they could have been understood.” Page 85, *The Catholic Faith*, Roderick Strange, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986.

In the early Church, baptism was thought to remove previous sins. It was viewed as something that could not be repeated they had to wait until they were sure they were dying otherwise they would be stuck in their sins. Whatever these people thought of forgiveness they did not see absolution from a priest as being of any help.