

THE CONFESSION

Written by

Neal Avram Schneider

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART - CHAPEL - DAY

A small room for worship.

FATHER JOHN (gentle 60s) sits in quiet contemplation.

His eyes open and he notices a small painting out of place and adjusts it. This is his home.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART - OFFICE

Coffee drips. Father John waits patient as always.

Across the office, and through the hall, an office administrator ANNE (50s) tries hard to conceal a heated personal phone call.

John catches her out of the corner of his eye.

The COFFEE beeps. And he fills himself a cup.

FATHER JOHN
Good Morning Anne.

ANNE
Father. I'm sorry about that.

FATHER JOHN
That's quite alright. We all have personal lives, right?

Anne knows this is an opening.

ANNE
I'm having some problems at home and I'm not sure what to do.

FATHER JOHN
I'm sorry to hear that.

ANNE
My husband and I have been having a lot of arguments lately. It's really taking a toll on our relationship.

FATHER JOHN
That sounds difficult. It's important to communicate openly and honestly with your partner, and to try to find ways to resolve conflicts peacefully.
(MORE)

FATHER JOHN (CONT'D)
Have you tried speaking with him
about how you feel?

ANNE
Yes, we've tried that, but it just
seems like we can't see eye to eye
on anything.

FATHER JOHN
It can be challenging when we feel
like we're not being heard or
understood by our loved ones. A
mediator or counselor could
facilitate communication. Find ways
to move forward.

ANNE
I'd like that.

FATHER JOHN
Remember that it's okay to ask for
help when you need it, and it's
never too late to work on improving
your relationship.

She smiles at him. And notices a PARISHIONER in the Chapel.

ANNE
I didn't mean to take over your
day.

FATHER JOHN
My day is all of yours.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART - CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Father John enters the confessional, takes a small personal
prayer and then it begins...

PARISHIONER
Forgive me, Father, for I have
sinned. It has been one week since
my last confession.

FATHER JOHN
What are your sins, my child?

PARISHIONER
I lied to my boss about why I
couldn't come into work. I was
feeling overwhelmed and didn't want
to deal with it. I'm sorry, Father.

FATHER JOHN

Lying is a serious sin, but it is one that can be forgiven through sincere repentance and the promise to do better in the future. Say an Our Father and a Hail Mary as acts of contrition, and try to be more honest in your interactions with others.

PARISHIONER

Thank you, Father. I will try to do better.

FATHER JOHN

Is there anything else weighing on your conscience that you'd like to confess?

PARISHIONER

Well, there is something. I've been struggling with feelings of anger and resentment towards my sister, sometimes acting on them. I love her, but I can't seem to let go of these negative emotions.

FATHER JOHN

It's important to forgive those who have wronged us, not just for their sake, but for our own peace of mind. Remember that God's love is boundless and forgiving. Try to let go of your anger and resentment, and pray for the strength to forgive your sister.

PARISHIONER

I'll try, Father. It's just so hard sometimes.

FATHER JOHN

I understand. It's not easy to forgive, but it's essential for our spiritual well-being. And remember, God's love is always with you, even in your darkest moments.

PARISHIONER

Thank you, Father. I'll try to remember.

FATHER JOHN

Is there anything else?

PARISHIONER

Well, there is one more thing. I've been having doubts about my faith lately.

FATHER JOHN

Doubts and struggles with faith are a normal part of the human experience. It's important to pray and seek guidance from God and the Church during these times. Remember that God is always with you, even when you don't feel it.

PARISHIONER

I'm not sure if I believe in God anymore.

FATHER JOHN

How can you say that? Don't you see all the blessings in your life? The love of your family, the roof over your head, the food on your table? These are all gifts from God. Don't you see that?

PARISHIONER

I'm sorry, Father. I know you mean well. But I can't just blindly accept everything I'm told. I need to question and think for myself.

FATHER JOHN

Questioning your faith is one thing, but to turn your back on it entirely? That is a grave sin. How can you be so ungrateful to the one who gave you life?

PARISHIONER

I'm sorry, Father. I didn't mean to upset you. I just needed to be honest with myself and with you.

Father John takes a moment to compose himself.

FATHER JOHN

You know, I struggle with forgiveness too. I lost my sister in a car accident a few years ago, and it's been difficult for me to let go of my anger and resentment towards the driver who caused the accident.

(MORE)

FATHER JOHN (CONT'D)

But I know that holding onto these negative emotions is not healthy for me, and it's not what God wants for me. So I try to pray for the strength to forgive, and to find peace and healing in my loss.

PARISHIONER

I understand. But I've been struggling with guilt and shame over something I did in the past. I can't seem to let go of it, and I'm starting to wonder if there are any acts that are unforgivable. Am I beyond hope?

FATHER JOHN

No, my child, you are not beyond hope. God's love and mercy are boundless, and no sin is so great that it cannot be forgiven through the power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The Church teaches that all sins can be forgiven through the sacrament of reconciliation, also known as confession.

PARISHIONER

I'm not sure I'm ready to confess. I'm not even sure I'm sorry for what I did.

FATHER JOHN

That's okay. The sacrament of reconciliation is not just about confessing our sins and receiving absolution, but also about seeking healing and guidance. It's a journey, and you don't have to have everything figured out before you take the first step. The important thing is to come to the sacrament with an open and receptive heart, and a willingness to turn away from sin and seek God's love and mercy. If you're struggling with feelings of guilt and shame, I encourage you to come and speak with me. I'll listen and offer guidance and support as you seek to find healing and reconciliation with God.

PARISHIONER

I... think I understand.

FATHER JOHN

It takes time and the heavenly
father has all the time in the
world.

The Parishioner takes in his words.

FATHER JOHN (CONT'D)

Is there anything else you want to
unburden yourself with?

PARISHIONER

Well.... there is one more thing. I
heard a rumor of a scandal within
the church. Is that true?

Father John hardens for the first time.

FATHER JOHN

I'm sorry, but I am not at liberty
to discuss any internal matters
within the church.

PARISHIONER

I understand, Father. It's just
that I've heard some disturbing
things about you, and I wanted to
know if there was any truth to
them. I'm worried about you.

FATHER JOHN

I assure you, there is nothing to
worry about. I have done nothing
wrong. Now, is there anything else
you'd like to confess?

PARISHIONER

I'm glad to hear it, Father. But if
you don't mind me asking, how do
you know there's nothing to worry
about?

FATHER JOHN

What do you mean?

PARISHIONER

Well, if you're innocent, then why
were you so defensive when I asked
about the scandal?

FATHER JOHN

I... I don't know. I suppose I was
just caught off guard.

PARISHIONER

I understand. It's a sensitive topic. But I have to be honest with you, Father. I'm not just a parishioner. I'm a journalist. And I have evidence that suggests you were involved in--

PARISHIONER (CONT'D)

FATHER JOHN

--a cover-up of--

--my son--

sexual abuse within the church.

FATHER JOHN (CONT'D)

What? No, that's not true. I had no knowledge of any such abuse.

PARISHIONER

I'm sorry, Father, but I have documentation that proves otherwise. Accounts on the record, and it will be public. *This is why--*

FATHER JOHN

No, please. I beg of you. Think of the damage this will do to the church, to my reputation, to the victims. There must be another way.

PARISHIONER

I'm sorry, Father. But the truth must be told. It's the only way to bring justice to the victims and prevent further--

FATHER JOHN

No! I said no!

OUTSIDE THE STALL

Father John breaks confession and stumbles out.

Anne rushes over to see what's the matter.

He KNOCKS over a painting, before composing himself again.

The three of them stand in silence.

CUT TO:

TITLE: THE CONFESSION