

## *Understanding Episcopal Liturgy*

### *#53. What is the reason we say the confession almost every Sunday?*

Jesus instructs his disciples to examine their own behavior, to ask for forgiveness, and to forgive others. For Jesus, this work of forgiveness is a central part of the spiritual life. God's forgiveness of our mistakes, and God's acceptance of us as God's children, is one of the greatest gifts of our lives. So we make the process of forgiveness, absolution, and self-examination a central part of our worship services.

As with many parts of worship, the Prayer of Confession has its roots in the worship practices of our Jewish forebearers. Prayers of Confession played a central role in the worship services Jesus and his disciples attended. These types of prayers continued to be used by Jesus' followers after his death and resurrection.

About 150 years ago scholars discovered an ancient text, which they called *Didache* (meaning 'teaching'). *Didache* was written at about the same time as the Gospel of John (somewhere around 95 AD). *Didache* was written as an instruction book for Jesus' followers as they organized their worship services. *Didache* instructs Christians to participate in prayers of confession prior to celebrating the Eucharist. So we continue the tradition of confessing our sins each week, except during the Easter season.