



## Catholic Church and School

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I have a cousin who is a volunteer firefighter and he once explained to me about a "lifeline". He said before entering a dangerous place, a firefighter must insure that he or she can return to a place of safety. They must do this to save their lives from the dark dangers that lie ahead.

So, firefighters will take a "lifeline", maybe a rope or a fire hose, and they tie it to a place of safety or maybe give it to someone that they trust. Then they tie the other end around the waist or hold that lifeline in hand while entering the building. If the danger and darkness becomes too great, then the firefighter retreats back to that place of safety by following the lifeline, sometimes pulling hand over hand, step by step, blinded by darkness, until they reach safety outside. Often the firefighter is pulled to safety by others, especially in water rescues like a lake or river. The lifeline is a matter of life and death.

In today's Gospel, St. Peter cries out for a lifeline. He cries out, "Lord, save me." St. Peter could not save himself. He had to trust totally in Jesus. St. Peter was in raging water with no way to pull himself to safety in the mad rush of wind and waves and water. Peter called for Jesus and Jesus reached out to him.

Jesus reaches out His hand to you and me. He's already thrown us a lifeline. Jesus is our place of safety and His Holy Catholic Church is our lifeline, the way in which Jesus saves us. Jesus uses the Sacraments of His Church and the teaching of His Church to reach out and save us.

We're already walking on the water with Jesus. In the waters of Baptism, we ask to walk on the water with Jesus just like Peter did. Baptism is necessary before any other sacrament because it is God strengthening us to hold on; it removes the anchor of original sin and ties on the lifeline of God's grace. Without Baptism, the other sacraments are not able to pull us to Christ, there is nothing there to hold onto; we cannot hold on by our own strength or save ourselves. We must be pulled by Jesus. Beginning with Baptism, God's grace grabs us, and our lifeline in the Church is secured. It's never by our own strength but relying totally on Christ, we ask for God's help, to be pulled to safety with the sacraments, and to walk step by step with Christ's teaching, to reach the heavenly shore beyond the dark and dangerous world.

The rope of a lifeline is made of individual threads that work together to give strength. The more threads you have, the better off you are. If you are being saved, you want as many threads of rope as you can get. But some threads of our lifelines get cut when we sin or ignore Christ's teachings. This puts more pressure on the remaining threads and causes our ropes to fray. Eventually, the rope can break and we're in real danger of going down just like Peter. But Jesus always says to us, "Come."

Jesus says "Come" through the sacrament of Confession. Confession is the way for us to cry out, "Lord, save me." Confession is the way of fixing our lifelines. Confession is

important and necessary because it repairs our ropes and it allows Christ to pull us better and stronger toward Himself. As our lifelines get frayed and broken thru sin, they must first be inspected and repaired by Confession before receiving Communion.

Jesus says to us "Come" at Communion. You may have seen the television evangelists invite people to come forward to that altar to invite Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior, to ask Jesus to save them. We do the same thing at each Mass. It's called Communion. Our Communion is an altar call. The TV evangelists didn't invent that. We invented the altar call. Our Communion is coming forward to dedicate our lives to Christ and to acknowledge that we need Him to save us and pull us to the safety of heaven.

Let us continue to hold onto the lifeline that Christ gives us thru His teaching and sacraments in His Church. Let us cry out often along with St. Peter, "Lord, save me" thru frequent Confession and Communion. It really is matter of life and death.

*Fr. David Ruppert at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana  
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