

Cyber Confession?

With our new high-tech, "cyber" society, the question has been raised... "Can I use eMail, interactive chat and/or video calls through the Internet for the sacrament of Reconciliation? When I go to Confession, I'm behind a screen, so what's the difference if the screen I'm behind is a computer screen?"

That question was answered once again, loud and clear, on the 9th of January of 2003 in a *Note of the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See*, issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary and published in the *Official Bulletin of the Archbishopric of Coria-Caceres*, in Spain. In that note, the Holy See declared that the use of all electronic means, including eMails and faxes, are prohibited from use when dealing with matters covered by the secrecy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This guidance was provided for all bishops and priests. Reasoning for the ruling on the prohibition was that electronic means to address questions covered by the secrecy of the sacrament "might degenerate in the violation of the very constitutive and inherent elements of the Sacrament of Penance." And thus, the note appeals to bishops and religious major superiors to instruct priests to avoid the use of technology and "use only epistolary means in communications with the Apostolic Penitentiary on all matters covered by the sacramental secrecy, the secrecy of conscience, and other prudential reasons."

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