

# Confession helps those with ‘guilt complexes’

VATICAN CITY – Many people today seem to have a difficult time recognizing sin, but at the same time the number of people suffering from “guilt complexes” seems to be growing, Pope Benedict XVI said.

“We see a humanity that wants to be self-sufficient, where not a few maintain they can do without God and still live well, and yet so many seem sadly condemned to face dramatic situations” of emptiness, violence and solitude, the pope said March 16.

“Today it seems that a ‘sense of sin’ has been lost, but in return ‘guilt complexes’ have increased,” he told priests and seminarians participating in a Vatican-sponsored course on the sacrament of confession.

Only Jesus, who died “to defeat forever the power of evil with the omnipotence of divine love,” can free people from “the yoke of death” that oppresses them, the pope said.

“We all need to draw from the inexhaustible spring of divine love, which has been manifested to us completely in the mystery of the cross, in order to find real peace with God, with ourselves and with our neighbors,” Pope Benedict said.

The sacrament of confession, he said, makes the love and mercy of God visible and gives people the grace they need to continue fighting sin.

“The task of the priest and confessor principally is this: to lead each person to experience Christ’s love for him by meeting him on the path of his own life,” the pope said.

“In his words and the way he approaches the penitent,” Pope Benedict said, the priest must allow God’s loving mercy to shine forth.

The confessor must help the penitent rise from his sense of guilt and shame, change

his ways and resolutely set out again on the path toward holiness, the pope said.

To do this, the pope said, the priest must “remain faithful to the teaching of the church’s moral doctrine, conscious that the law of good and evil is not determined by situations, but by God.”

Pope Benedict prayed that priests and all Catholics would “increasingly understand the value and importance of the sacrament of penance for the spiritual growth of every faithful.”