

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

The whole Church throughout the world rejoices that you have come to receive the grace of this wondrous Sacrament! We hope and pray it will be a moment of grace and healing and strengthen you for the road ahead!

In order to assist you to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation well, we encourage you to use this leaflet to prepare your mind and heart, and to assist you when you meet with the priest. God bless you!

You have come here to experience the Lord's forgiveness and compassion. This is a tremendously personal moment in your relationship with God. To get the most from your confessional-encounter with Christ, you should prepare well. You should arouse within yourself a true, deep sorrow for your sins, an awareness of how your sins may have offended God, or hurt others, or even hurt yourself. **Now is a time to give these things over to God. You should not get caught up in your sinfulness, but in giving these things over to Christ the Church desires that you experience, not shame or guilt, but the loving mercy of our Heavenly Father.**

Remember that, above all else, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an act of God's love, it is a personal moment in your lifelong relationship with God. It is not routine, it is not an ordeal to just get through – but is instead an opportunity to be renewed by Christ, who came to seek and save the lost.

You are thus invited, in the light of God's love

- to recognize, acknowledge, and sincerely confess past sins in your life to a priest
- to have a true sorrow for them
- and a firm intention to avoid them in the future

These three elements are essential to a proper and meaningful celebration of this Sacrament.

Sin is not merely a series of failures. It is a sharing in what is actually evil: unbelief, indifference, selfishness, violence, contempt for the weak, impurity, racism, neglect of the poor, greed, wastefulness, a spirit of pride or superiority ...

But remember, as Pope Saint John Paul II said, "We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus."

So, take courage, and do not be afraid. The Lord loves you from the depths of His Sacred Heart, and he desires your freedom and happiness.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no gods besides me.

Did I fail to love God, to make Him first in my life, to thank Him, trust Him, love Him as He deserves? Did I fail to pray? Have I doubted or denied my faith? Was I careless in saying my prayers? Do I give God time everyday in prayer? Do I make a god out of my work, my possessions, my image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God? Do I make a god out of television or the computer? Am I harboring bitter feelings towards God because of illness or misfortune? Have I been involved with magic, horoscopes, Ouija boards, or fortune telling?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord you God in Vain.

Did I curse or swear? Did I use the name of God in vain, lightly, carelessly, by blasphemy? Have I used foul language or jokes? In conversation, have I passively listened to slander and to jokes which demean the Church or God?

3. Keep the Lord's Day holy.

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Did I leave Mass early without a good reason? Have I gone to Communion at least once a year? Did I receive Holy Communion in a state of serious sin? Have I allowed myself to become so dominated by work or chores on Sunday that I have not set aside time for spiritual and family activities?

4. Honor your Mother and Father.

Have I honored and obeyed my parents? Did I respect my brothers and sisters? Did I respect others with lawful authority, including teachers? Have I spoken disrespectfully? Do I fail to serve my family? Do I fail to spend time with my family? Do I blame my family for my own shortcomings?

5. You shall not kill.

Did I give in to feelings of anger or jealousy? Have I harbored hatred in my heart? Have I struck anyone with the intent to injure or harm them? Did I fight, give a bad example, or cause scandal? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I had an abortion, or supported another in having an abortion? Have I supported abortion in my civic affairs? Have I considered suicide? Have I killed someone? Have I killed someone's reputation by gossip or unkind words?

6. You shall not commit adultery

Have I looked at another with lust? Have I touched myself or others impurely? Do I foster impure thoughts or fantasies? Was I immodest in my behavior or dress? Did I look at pornography on the computer, on television or in books or magazines? Am I guilty of impurity with myself or others? Have I objectified others? Have I engaged in pre-marital or extra-marital physical intimacy? Do I avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness? Have I avoided temptations to sin?

7. You shall not steal.

Have I stolen what is not mine? What or how much? Did I return it or make up for what I have stolen? Have I cheated at work or school? Do I waste time at work? Have I been extravagant in my manner of life, to the neglect of the poor at home or abroad?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I lied or gossiped? Talked about another person behind their back? Do I always tell the truth? Am I sincere? Did I reveal secrets that should have been kept confidential? Have I deliberately lied or concealed something in my previous confessions to a priest? Am I critical, negative, or judgmental in my speech? Have I injured the reputation of another by talking about their failures and sins without an intention to help them? Have I condoned prejudice or hatred towards others because of race, nationality or religion?

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I consented to impure thoughts about another person? Have I fostered unhealthy curiosity or conversations? Do I neglect to control my imagination or desire of other people? Have I rejected my family in my heart? Have I distanced myself from my family emotionally or personally without trying to reconcile?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Is my heart set on earthly possessions over heavenly possessions? Have I been greedy? Am I jealous of what others have? Am I envious of others because I don't have what they have? Do I habitually compare myself with others? Do I lack an attitude of gratitude? Am I moody or gloomy? Am I uncharitable to others? Have I damaged things which belong to others?

Omissions

Have I failed to show others love, kindness or support in my words or actions? Were there times when I could have done good, but chose not to?

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

TOGETHER WITH PRIEST: In the name of the Father +, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PENITENT: Bless me Father, for I have sinned, it has been (length of time) since my last confession.

(Either priest or penitent *may* say a verse from Scripture)

PENITENT: These are my sins ... **NOW YOU CAN CONFESS YOUR SINS**

- Grave sins should be confessed specifically, and you should say how many times they occurred (e.g., once, a few times, or many times).
- Venial (minor) sins may be confessed more generally.
- Be sure you do not intentionally leave anything out.
- If you confess everything you remember, and later recall a sin you genuinely forgot, know that it is forgiven. Every sin we've committed gets forgiven in confession, even the sins we don't say, so long as we genuinely did not recall them or remember to say them.

PRIEST: Will usually give some words of encouragement or direction. Then he will give you a penance (e.g., 3 Hail Mary's, 1 Our Father, 5 Minutes of silent prayer, 1 Decade of the Rosary, etc.) to complete afterwards. Then the priest will ask the penitent to say the Act of Contrition.

PENITENT: Will now say the **Act of Contrition**

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven, and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

PRIEST: Will now say the Prayer of Absolution:

God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to himself, and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.

Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father +, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRIEST: GO IN PEACE

PENITENT: THANKS BE TO GOD. AND GOD BLESS YOU FATHER.

You should be sure to do your penance as soon as possible. Once you have completed your penance, you are totally forgiven and free.

Be at peace and Rejoice!
