

Confession... a Brief Review

Do you believe there is such a thing as sin? A right and wrong? Many voices in our culture are always sending messages that there is no objective "right and wrong" and it is up to each of us to decide for ourselves. In our hearts we know this is not true, but we absorb the attitudes of our culture and don't pay attention to those parts of ourselves that are broken and that separate us from God and one another. As a result, we do not take advantage of the healing, love and mercy the Lord is offering to us. If you are feeling stuck in your spiritual life, Confession is a good place to begin.

Reconciliation (also known as Confession or Penance) is a Sacrament instituted by Christ in his love and mercy to offer us forgiveness for our sins. This Sacrament reconciles us to God, the Church and one another.

To make a good Confession, we review our lives since our last Confession, searching our thoughts, words, and actions to discover where we fell short in our relationship with God and our neighbor. We think about "what we have done" and "what we have failed to do". If it has been a while since you have gone to Confession, it may be hard to know where to begin in thinking through what you should bring to this Sacrament.

Before you start, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the areas of your life that need God's mercy and forgiveness. Additionally, some people like to use an Examination of Conscience to help them. If you did a Google search, you would find many versions of the Examination of Conscience. Some are brief and some are quite lengthy. Following is a brief one to assist you:

Do I cling to my will, my desires, my ways?

Have I thanked God for His gifts to me?

Did I take the name of God in vain?

Am I ashamed to witness to my faith in God to others?

Did I curse or take a false oath?

Did I miss Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation through my own fault? (for reasons other than sickness, taking care of a loved one or circumstances beyond my control)

Am I attentive at Mass?

Do I take time for daily prayer?

Did I observe the fast and abstinence on the prescribed days?

Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge?

Did I refuse to forgive? Was I disrespectful? Was I selfish or prideful?

Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs?

Did I consent to, recommend, or actively take part in an abortion?

Was I unfaithful to my spouse? Did I engage in sexual activity outside of marriage?

Did I steal or damage another's property?

Have I been honest and just in my business relations?

Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor and respected the dignity of others?

Did I tell lies? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters?

Have I envied other people? Did I gossip?

Am I able to forgive myself? Do I seek to be humble and to bring peace?

See the reverse side for a Cheat Sheet on how to go to Confession.



Confession Cheat Sheet

(Remember Father will help you through it!)

1. Father welcomes you.
2. Begin with Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

3. **Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been _____ since my last Confession.**
4. Confess your sins to Father. When you are finished, say **For these and all of my sins I am sorry.**
5. Father will give you a penance.
6. Father will invite you to pray an Act of Contrition (see below)
7. Father will give you absolution by praying:

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.

8. Father will end with “His mercy endures forever” or “Go in peace” or something similar.
9. Don’t forget to complete your penance.

A prayer of Contrition is one that expresses your sorrow. Below are two options but there are others. More important than the words of the prayer, is the true sorrow in your heart.

Prayer of Contrition

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God have mercy.

Or

Lord Jesus, Son of God
have mercy on me a sinner.

