

Examination of Conscience

Before you receive the Sacrament, spend some time in quiet reflection, preparing yourself in mind and heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Take your time to make a careful 'Examination of Conscience'. To do that, think carefully about your life and the things for which you need forgiveness. Ask yourself how you have offended God by sins against God and sins against others. The following may help you to understand how you personally need God's help.

The Love of God

Do I really love God above all things, or have I made other things—money, clothes, sports, TV, music, video games—more important than God?
Have I rejected my faith or refused to find out more about it?
Have I forgotten my daily prayers or said them badly?
Have I shown disrespect for any holy things, places or people?
Have I used the words "God" or "Jesus" carelessly, in anger or when surprised?
Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, the Church and those who have consecrated their lives to God?
Have I missed Sunday Mass when I could have gone?
Do I arrive at church late or leave early?
Have I let myself be distracted at Mass or have I distracted others by talking?
When I have received Holy Communion, have I done so without reverence, care or thanksgiving?

Love of Others

Have I been unhelpful at home?
Have I failed to try to understand my parents and talk openly and honestly with them?
Have I upset the peace of my home for selfish reasons by being argumentative?
Have I lost control when I have been angry?
Have I sulked or been sarcastic instead of asking for help?
Have I failed to work at school?
Have I treated others with disrespect?
Have I played unfairly at games or sports?

Have I been violent towards another person?
Have I hurt anyone by speaking badly about them?
Have I stopped speaking to anyone? Do I hold any grudges or try to get even with others? Have I failed to forgive others?
Have I spoken badly about another person on a social website or mobile phone —Facebook, Twitter etc.?
Have I betrayed friends by revealing their secrets or told things simply to hurt others?
Have I harmed animals, littered or been destructive to the environment?
Have I spoken in an obscene way?
Have I looked at websites, magazines, pictures or books which are inappropriate?
Do I treat my body and other people's bodies with purity and respect?
Have I told lies to excuse myself, to hurt others or to make myself look more important?
Have I stolen anything?
Have I misused or damaged the property of others?
Have I wasted food?
Have I been jealous of others—of their looks, their popularity, the things they own, their work?
Do I set my heart on owning things rather than helping others less well off than myself?
Have I encouraged others to do wrong in any way?

Act of Sorrow

O my God,
I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins; for not loving others and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again.
Amen



Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation



The Sacrament of Confession

What is Confession?

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an opportunity for us to make a new beginning in our lives of faith. This sacrament brings us the forgiveness of God and his Church as we recognise our need for his mercy and pardon in our lives. It is not easy for us to admit our sinfulness—and it can be very difficult for us to face our own weaknesses and failings.

The sacrament of confession, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes, is so called because the “confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament”. At the same time, the *Catechism* reminds us that “it is also called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent ‘pardon and peace’”. Finally, it is also called the sacrament of Reconciliation because it reconciles sinners to God and then to each other.

Through this Sacrament, we meet Christ in his Church ready and eager to absolve and restore us to new life. To celebrate this Sacrament fruitfully we need to spend some moments looking at our lives and asking for the grace of God to see ourselves as we are. Preparation is essential if this Sacrament is to be relevant to our lives. So we should pray for a spirit of humility and for the grace to honestly evaluate our lives.

What is sin?

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sin “is an offence against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is wilfully rejecting good and choosing evil.”

Why is Confession Necessary?

We need the Sacrament of Penance because each of us, from time to time, sins. When we recognise that we have offended God, who is all deserving of our love, we sense the need to make things right. Like the prodigal son in the Gospel, we long to know again the loving forgiveness of God who patiently waits for each of us.

Jesus himself has established this sure and certain way for us to access God’s mercy and to know that our sins are forgiven. By virtue of his divine authority, Jesus gives this power of absolution to the priest. If you are hesitant about what to do, ask the priest for help. You always have the option to go to confession anonymously, that is, behind a screen or face to face, if you so desire.



Why do I receive a penance?

To complete the process, a penance is given. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all disorders caused by sin. Through some action or prayer, we express our desire to make amends and to repair something of the disorder, damage or harm our actions have brought into the world. The penance imposed takes into account the penitent’s personal situation and serves to support his or her spiritual good. It may be a prayer, an offering, works of mercy, sacrifices or service to another.

Words of Encouragement (from a priest)

My dear friend, I know that going to confession is not easy and you may be embarrassed. But don’t worry—just say what is in your heart and give it over to Jesus. He will strengthen and protect you. It is a wonderful sacrament of pardon and peace. You are protected by the “Seal of Confession” so that what you say is kept safe. Nobody will ever know except you and Jesus.



Most of all, cherish your faith as a great gift. Grow in the love of God to become the person he has made you to be. There is only one of you so make sure to be the best that you can be. Now that you have come to the sacrament once, come regularly and grow in wisdom, faith and the love of God.

How to Celebrate the Sacrament?

- **Greeting:** The priest welcomes you warmly and greets you with kindness.
- **Sign of the Cross:** Then the penitent makes the Sign of the Cross, which the priest may also make.
- **Confession of Sins:** The priest invites the penitent to have trust in God. The penitent begins: “Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. These are my sins.....” The penitent confesses his or her sins honestly and openly. You might even want to discuss the circumstances and the root causes of your sins and ask the priest for advice or direction.
- **Penance:** The priest will then propose a penance as an outward sign of your desire to make amends for sins against God and others.
- **Prayer of Sorrow:** Sorrow is expressed by praying the Act of Sorrow. The priest then prays the Prayer of Absolution, to which the penitent responds: “Amen.”
- **Dismissal:** The priest will then dismiss you saying: “The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.” And you respond by saying: “Thanks be to God.”
- **Thanksgiving:** Spend some time with our Lord thanksgiving and praising Him for the gift of his mercy. Try to fulfil your penance as soon as possible.

Prayer After Confession

Dear Jesus,
thank you for helping me to make a good Confession,
and thank you for taking away my sins.
Help me, dear Jesus, never to offend you again.
Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me.
My dear Angel Guardian help me. Amen

