What Is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation (also known as confession or penance) is the sacrament through which the love and mercy of Jesus Christ is offered to us who confess our sins.

In Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and his Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and his Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future.

The forgiveness of sins involves four parts:

**CONTRITION**: a sincere sorrow for having sinned against God and others. It is an essential element of the sacrament since there can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our past wrongs.

**CONFESSION**: confronting our sins in a profound way by speaking about them—aloud—to the priest.

**PENANCE**: an important part of our conversion and healing is changing our lives. The priest asks us to make reparation for our sin through prayer and action.

**ABSOLUTION**: After asking for forgiveness, the priest absolves us of our sins by saying: I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Rite of Reconciliation

1. The Priest will greet you, and both of you make the Sign of the Cross. You may want to give some basic information about your life and the time of your last confession.
2. The Word of God may be proclaimed.
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him, and ask for help.)
4. The priest offers advice and gives you an act of penance to help you be a better Catholic.
5. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

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Reconciliation
A Short Guide

“I, too, am a sinner. I know it is never easy to speak aloud our faults and ask forgiveness. However, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we encounter the healing ministry of Christ through the ministry of the priest. We meet Christ, the Divine Healer, in the Sacrament, and we are cleansed of our sins, healed of the darkness that keeps us from living our true calling in Christ Jesus, and strengthened for our journey of faith.”

– Archbishop Schnurr
How to Make a Good Confession

Confession can seem difficult, but it does not have to be! A little preparation goes a long way.

It is good to begin with prayer, and place ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. We seek healing and forgiveness through repentance and a resolve to sin no more.

Then we review our lives since our last confession, searching our thoughts, words, and actions for that which did not conform to God’s command to love him and one another through his laws and the laws of his Church.

This is called an examination of conscience.

To make an examination of conscience:

- Begin with a prayer asking for God’s help.
- Review your life. To help you do this, there are some questions, which are based on the Ten Commandments (see next panel).
- Tell God how truly sorry you are for your sins.
- Make a firm resolution not to sin again.

Examination of Conscience

Before you go to confession, review your life and recall your sins. Prayerfully ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

- Do I pray to God every day? Have I thanked God for his gifts to me?
- Did I put my faith in danger or engage in superstitious practices?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse or take a false oath?
- Did I miss Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Did I keep fast and abstinence on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents and lawful superiors in important matters?
- Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Was I disrespectful? Did I gossip?
- Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs?
- Did I consent to, recommend, advise, or actively take part in an abortion?
- Did I willfully look at pornography or engage in impure conversations or actions? Did I use artificial means to prevent conception?
- 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?
- Have I shared my wealth with others?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by detraction of others? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters?
- Have I envied other people?

Rite of Reconciliation

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is the most comfortable for you.

1. The priest gives you a greeting.

2. After you make the Sign of the Cross, you may share some basic information about your life [e.g. give the number of weeks, months, or years since your last confession]. Then the Word of God may be proclaimed.

3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. The priest will help you to make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. Place your trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive you.

4. Following your confession of sins, you may say, “I am sorry for these and all of my sins.”

5. The priest assigns you a penance and offers advice to help you be a better disciple of Christ.

6. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

Act 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. Amen. (Rite of Penance, 45)