

A Short Guide to Sacrament of Reconciliation

What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is a sacrament found in the healing and salvific work of Jesus Christ. In His love and mercy He offers sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time sinners reconcile with the Church, because it also is wounded by our sins.

This is good news for all of us, because we all are sinners and in need of God's forgiveness. In the sacrament of Reconciliation, we meet Christ in the person of the priest, ready and eager to absolve us and restore us to new life. We confess our sins to God through his minister, the priest, who absolves us in the name of Christ.

What is Required for Forgiveness?

For forgiveness of sins, three acts are required from the penitent as parts of the sacrament.

1. **Contrition:** sincere sorrow for having offended God is the most important act of the penitent. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.
2. **Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way to God, by speaking about them aloud to the priest.
3. **Satisfaction:** an important part of healing is the penance the priest imposes on the penitent in reparation for one's sins.

Why Do We Confess Our Sins to a Priest?

1. Christ Himself instituted this sacrament, and the priest has the authority of the apostles by virtue of his ordination to absolve sins in the name of the Lord. Jesus said to the apostles, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound" (Jn 20:22-23).
See also 2 Cor 2:10 and 2 Cor 5:18.
2. The priest is the spiritual father. Just as we see a doctor for healing when we are physically sick, we see a priest when our soul is sick and needs healing. Just as a person becomes nervous visiting a doctor or may be anxious over what a doctor may find or prescribe, that same person knows the doctor's guidance will bring better health; the same is true with the spiritual medicine a priest has to offer.
3. Third, the priest represents the Church and the people we have sinned against.

How Do I Know What to Confess?

Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation. We should begin with prayer, placing 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 that did not conform to God's love, to His law, or to the laws of the Church. This is called an examination of conscience.

To make an examination of conscience, review your life with the help of some questions. Click here for some things to consider

Examination of Conscience.

What Do I Say During Reconciliation?

The priest will help you make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive you. Here are the steps for the Rite of Reconciliation.

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 (how long?) since my last confession, and these are my sins:"*

Confess your sins.

Priest: Gives you a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Christian.

Penitent: (Pray the 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 plan, 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."

Priest: Gives you absolution.

Priest: *"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good."*

Penitent: *"For His mercy endures forever."*

Penitent: Recite or do your penance as soon as possible.