

## CONFESSION AND ACT OF CONTRITION:

The priest may then speak to you. He may try to help you to see the source of your sinful actions. Usually, we're sinful because we're selfish. He'll also assure you of God's love for you. He will then propose an act of penance, which you accept to make satisfaction for sin and to amend your life. He may then ask you to pray an act of contrition. It is just fine to pray a spontaneous prayer ... e.g. "God, I'm sorry for my sins. Give me the strength I'll need to leave them behind and live a new kind of life." You may wish to pray the Act of Contrition you learned as a child. An example:

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.

## ABSOLUTION

The priest will extend his hand toward you as he prays the Church's prayer of absolution:

## DISMISSAL

The priest may pray a short closing prayer with you. He may also simply say, Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Your response can be very natural ... a simple Amen, or Thank You ... Have a good day. Then go to spend some time considering your Penance.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

But isn't there something I can take along, so I won't feel like I'm forgetting something? Certainly...

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

Bless me Father for I have sinned, my last Confession was \_\_\_\_\_ ago. These are my sins. [Confess sins here]

## ACT OF CONTRITION:

Lord Jesus, you opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, forgave the sinful woman, and after Peter's denial confirmed him in your love. Listen to my prayer: forgive all my sins, renew your love in my heart, help me to live in perfect unity with my fellow Christians that I may proclaim your saving power to all the world.

## COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION

Sometimes a parish will schedule a Communal Reconciliation Service, usually during the Season of Advent or Lent. The first part of the Service will consist of songs, scripture readings, a homily and an examination of conscience. The priest may give all present a common penance, and even have them pray an Act of Contrition together. There should then be an opportunity for those present to come forward for private confession. Just follow the directions given and the service, and all will be well.

## How to go to: The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation



## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M READY?

If you've read this far, chances are you're serious about getting ready. Sometimes we are reluctant to go to Reconciliation because we're not sure what to do or what to say. How do we know that we're ready. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, three things are necessary ...

**CONTRITION:** Contrition is sorrow of the soul and detesting the sin(s) committed, together with the resolution not to sin again. The reception of this sacrament ought to be prepared for by an examination of conscience made in the light of the Word of God. Several such examinations are available in the back of the chapel.

**CONFESSION OF SINS:** The confession [or disclosure] of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission we: squarely look at the sins for which we are responsible; take responsibility for them, and; open ourselves to God in order to make a new future possible. Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance.

**SATISFACTION:** Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm — e.g. return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries. Simple justice requires as much. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin. This satisfaction is called "penance." It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial or sacrifices.

## GOD LOVES YOU

God loves us! God knows what the challenges of human life are all about. We can think about the story of the Prodigal Son: the great insult and hurt the son inflicted on the father, and; how the father welcomed him back without even waiting for an apology. We've all been hurt by family and friends, and are able to forgive. If we as humans can be so forgiving, how much more is God willing to forgive us!

## GOD WAITS

He waits for our return. "But I haven't been to Confession for fifty years!" The response is simply ... "Welcome back! How good it is that you are here!"

## IT'S NOT EASY

Rather than admit wrongdoing, Adam and Eve found it much easier for them to put the blame somewhere else. We can even try to make ourselves believe God doesn't know about our wrongdoing. While it is sometimes difficult to admit our sinfulness, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation provides an inner-healing and peace that only God can give!

## WHAT TO SAY

The priest will greet you in the Reconciliation Room or Confessional. If you choose to meet him face to face, simply exchange a normal greeting, such as good afternoon. He'll help you begin. You'll make the Sign of the Cross together.

Don't worry. The priest is there to help you! He may invite you to have trust in God by saying these or similar words: "May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy." You could respond with "Amen," if you'd like.

The priest may also read a short passage from Scripture. Simply listen!

## CONFESS YOUR SINS

It could be that after the Sign of the Cross, the priest may simply be silent. Then you could confess your sins. You might mention how long it has been since your last Confession. Many Catholics are used to beginning by saying, "Bless me Father for I have sinned. My last Confession was \_\_\_\_ ago. These are my sins." If you're stumped by this time, chances are the priest will simply ask, "What are your sins."

Then tell him what your sins are. Remember, it is important to confess all serious sins. Reconciliation means that we're ready to let go of all sins too. It's the ones we hold back that sometimes make things more difficult for us. So, no matter how difficult it seems, mention them all.