

How to Go to Confession

1. Preparation—Before going to confession, the penitent compares his or her life with the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the example of Christ and then prays to God for forgiveness.

2. Going to Confession—After the priest welcomes you, both of you make the sign of the cross. Then you may wish to indicate facts about your life, the time of the last confession, difficulties in leading the Christian life, and anything else that may help the priest.

3. The Word of God—You or the priest may read a scriptural passage.

4. Confession of Sins and the Act of Penance—Confess your sins. The priest then offers suitable advice and imposes an act of penance or satisfaction, which may include prayer, self-denial, or works of mercy.

5. Prayer of the Penitent—Pray a prayer expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving not to sin again. Two suggested prayers are given below:

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.
(*Rite of Penance*, no. 45)

or

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the Lamb of God;
you take away the sins of the world.
Through the grace of the Holy Spirit
restore me to friendship with your Father,
cleanse me from every stain of sin
in the blood you shed for me,
and raise me to new life
for the glory of your name.
(*Rite of Penance*, no. 91)

6. Absolution—The priest extends his hands over your head and pronounces the formula of absolution, making the sign of the cross over your head during the final words. You answer, "Amen."

7. Proclamation of Praise—Praise the mercy of God and give him thanks in a short invocation "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good." The priest may also choose a scriptural passage: "Rejoice in the Lord and sing for joy, friends of God" (Ps 32:1-7, 10-11), "The Lord has remembered his mercy" (Lk 1:46-55), or "Blessed be God who chose us in Christ" (Eph 1:3-10) (*Rite of Penance*, no. 206).

8. Dismissal—The priest dismisses you with the command to go in peace. Continue to express your conversion through a life renewed according to the Gospel and more and more steeped in the love of God.

Examination of Conscience

(The Examination of Conscience is adapted from Appendix III of the *Rite of Penance*.)

A. The Lord says, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart."

1. Is my heart set on God, so that I really love him above all things and am faithful to his commandments? Or am I more concerned about the things of this world?
2. God spoke to us in his Son. Is my faith in God firm and secure? Have I been careful to grow in my understanding of the faith, to hear God's word?
3. Do I pray regularly? Do I offer God my difficulties, my joys and my sorrows?
4. Have I love and reverence for God's name? Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?
5. Do I keep Sundays and feast days holy by taking a full part, with attention and devotion, in the liturgy, and especially in the Mass?
6. Are there false gods that I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper trust than I give to God: money, superstition, astrology?

B. The Lord says, "Love one another as I have loved you."

1. Have I a genuine love for my neighbors? Or do I use them for my own ends, or do to them what I would not want done to myself?
2. In my family life, have I shown proper respect toward my parents? Have I been careful to give a Christian upbringing to my children? Have I been faithful to my spouse?
3. Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate? Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune and poverty?

4. Does my life reflect the mission I received at confirmation? Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the church and in the life of my parish?

5. Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community in which I live, or do I spend my life caring only for myself? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality, harmony and love in human relations?

C. Christ our Lord says, "Be perfect as your Father is perfect."

1. Where is my life really leading me? Is the hope of eternal life my inspiration? Have I tried to grow in the life of the Spirit through prayer, reading the word of God, receiving the sacraments? Have I imposed my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights?
2. What use have I made of time, of health and strength, of the gifts God has given me? Do I use them to become more perfect each day?
3. Have I been patient in accepting the sorrows and disappointments of life?
4. Have I kept my whole body pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit? Have I dishonored my body physically or through unworthy conversation or thoughts? Have I indulged in activities which offend Christian or human decency?
5. Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?

A period of silence should always be included so that each person may personally examine his or her conscience. (*Rite of Penance*, Appendix II, #59)

Examination of Conscience

Use these questions to prepare for Reconciliation.

My Relationship with God

- Do I make time for prayer, to speak with God and listen to him on a regular basis?
- Do I come to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation?
- Am I ashamed to behave like Jesus in my life? At home? At school? With my friends?
- Do I get impatient and rebellious if things do not go my way?
- Do I turn to God only when I need something?

My Relationship with others

- Do I really love my neighbor?
- Do I forgive those people who hurt me, or make me angry?
- Do I complain about my family, my friends, others?
- Am I jealous of others?
- Do I say unkind things about other people?
- Do I try to help others?
- Do I say things or behave in ways that put other people down?
- Do I stick up for people who are mistreated or bullied?
- Am I sincere and honest with other people, or am I a bit fake sometimes?
- In my family life do I do things to help out and make things easier for my parents and other members of my family? Do I try to get along with them all the time?
- Do I respect the bodies of others?
- Do I treat my parents with respect?
- Do I make too many demands on my parents?
- Am I generous in my time with my family, or am I always going out to avoid them?

Myself

- Do I think I am better than everyone else?
- Do I truly live as a Christian and give good example to others?
- Do I gossip?
- Do I lie?
- Do I steal?
- Am I hateful or bad tempered?
- Do I treat my body with respect?
- Do I misuse the gifts that God has given me?
- Do I misuse the gift of my sexuality: alone or with others?
- Am I a show off?
- Am I a bully at school or at home?
- Do I eat too much food when others in the world are hungry?
- Do I misuse drugs or drink alcohol?

- Do I use bad or immoral language or tell dirty jokes?
- Do I look at immoral magazines, videos or make immoral use of the internet?
- Am I always thinking of myself?
- Do I use my time wisely and properly: doing my work on time?
- Am I lazy?
- Have I failed to do the work or study that I was responsible to do?

Now prepare for a good reconciliation and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Remember that God always forgives our sins and that the priest is here to help you and whatever you say is totally confidential.

5 steps towards a good Reconciliation

1. Examine my conscience. Think about the things that I want to say I am sorry for.
2. Be sorry for my sins.
3. Confess all my sins, and be honest with the priest.
4. Resolve to make changes in my life, and to try harder to avoid sin in the future.
5. After confessing my sins, do my penance.

Procedure during Reconciliation

After making the Sign of the Cross, begin by saying:

"Bless me Father for I have sinned ..."

Tell Father how long it has been since your last confession. Tell your sins and feel free to ask about any matter that worries you. Finish with:

"For these and all my sins I am truly sorry."

Father will give you some help and advice and ask you to do some penance: to say a prayer or do an act of kindness for someone. Then make an Act of Contrition, telling God you are sorry for your sins:

"My God, I'm sorry for my sins with all my heart. . . "

or

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

or

Or make one up—something like:

"My God I am sorry that I have sinned against you. You are so good and with your help I will not sin again. Amen."

The priest says:

"....I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

You answer: **"Amen."**

After the prayer of absolution Father says: **"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good."**

You answer: **"His mercy endures for ever."**

Father concludes with: **"The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace."**

You say thank you to Father and perform your penance.