

What Is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation (also known as confession or Penance) is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in his love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time, sinners reconcile with the Church, because it is also wounded by our sins.

Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people, and God. 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 offended God, and 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.
- **Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way to God by speaking about them—aloud—to the priest.
- **Penance:** an important part of our healing is the “penance” the priest imposes in reparation for our sins.
- **Absolution:** the priest speaks the words by which “God, the Father of Mercies” reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the Cross.

Rite of Reconciliation

1. Priest gives a blessing or greeting.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, “*Bless me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was [give weeks, months, or years].*”
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.)
4. Say, “*I am sorry for these and all of my sins.*”
5. The priest assigns a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.
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.

RECONCILIATION

A SHORT GUIDE

*The Sacrament of Reconciliation
is the story of God’s love
that never turns away from us.*

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How to Make a Good Confession

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 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 with the help of 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

Recall your sins. Prayerfully ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's and the Church's commandments.

- Do I pray to God every day? Have I thanked God for his gifts to me?
- Did I put my faith in danger through readings contrary to Catholic teachings or involvement in non-Catholic sects? Did I engage in superstitious practices: palm reading or fortune-telling?
- 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 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, entertain impure thoughts, 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?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by calumny, or 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 blessing or greeting. He may share a brief Scripture passage.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, "*Bless me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was* [give the number of weeks, months, or years]."
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. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive you.
4. Following your confession of sins, 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 Catholic.
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

God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace to confess my sins, do penance, and to amend my life.

Amen.