

A GUIDE TO THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

How to go to Confession

STEP 1: EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE

Before coming to the sacrament, reflect on what sins you have committed.

Did I go to Mass on Sunday? Did I pay attention at Mass?

Have I messed around in church?

Did I say my prayers every day?

Have I used God's name in an inappropriate way?

Did I say mean things to my mum or dad or brothers or sisters?

Did I always say "Thank You" to people?

Did I do what my mum, dad or teachers ask me to do?

Was I lazy around the house? Did I do my chores?

Did I hurt others people's feelings by calling them bad names?

Have I started fights with my brothers and sisters at home?

Have I blamed other people for things I do?

Did I get other people into trouble?

Do I hit people when I get mad?

Have I forgiven people? Or am I holding a grudge?

Have I cheated or been unfair in games?

Did I refuse to play with someone for no good reason?

Was I lazy about my schoolwork? Did I fail to do my homework?

Did I cheat in school?

Have I lied to my parents? My teachers? My friends?

Did I take anything that didn't belong to me?

REMEMBER: You can't sin "by accident" and if someone did something bad to you, it is not your sin, but theirs and you should tell an adult.

STEP 2: ENTER THE CONFESSIONAL

You always have the freedom to choose the priest you go to for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You also have the right to go to confession anonymously, that is, behind a screen. Many people prefer the screen because it's an extra reminder that they are confessing their sins to Jesus himself, not the priest.

The priest will greet you with the sign of the cross and may give some words of encouragement and recite a reading from Scripture.

Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
You: Amen

Priest: May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess your sins with true sorrow.

You: *Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It's about.....since my last confession. These are my sins...."*

STEP 3: CONFESS YOUR SINS

Name the sins that came to mind when doing your Examination of Conscience. Start with the one you are most sorry for or the hardest one to say. After confessing all the sins you remember since your last confession, you may conclude by saying something like, *"For these, and the other sins I cannot recall, I ask for pardon and absolution."*

STEP 4: PENANCE

The priest will then give you some words of advice or encouragement. The priest will suggest something for you to do or pray as a response to God's mercy. This is called a 'Penance'. You'll have to remember what this penance is and perform it after the confession is over.

STEP 5: ACT OF CONTRITION

The priest will then ask you to pray your "Act of Contrition," which shows that you are sorry for your sins. This needs to be prayed out loud for the priest to hear. Here is an example but there are many others that can be used:

You: O my God I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, because you are so good and with your help I will not sin again. Amen.

STEP 6: ABSOLUTION

The priest will extend his hand in your direction and he will pray the Prayer of Absolution. You make the sign of the cross when he blesses you.

Priest: *God, the Father of Mercies,
through the death and resurrection of his Son,
has reconciled the world to himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.
Through the ministry of the Church,
may God give you pardon and peace.
And I absolve you from your sins
in the name of the Father, +
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

You: *Amen*

Priest: *The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in Peace.*

You: *Thanks be to God.*

STEP 7: DO YOUR PENANCE

When you leave the priest, you go back to your place in the church and do the penance you were asked to do by the priest. If your penance is to say a certain prayer, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.