

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation *EXPLAINED*

The Sacrament of Reconciliation ought to be an **essential part of the life of every Catholic** Christian. Christ came to reconcile God and man. He went to the cross that we might be forgiven our sins. He wants us to live in communion with Him – in His grace – now and forever. And yet, we have the freedom to accept or reject His grace.

To emphasize the importance of remaining in His grace and friendship, the **second precept** of the Church states that "**You shall confess your sins at least once a year.**" This ensures preparation for the Holy Eucharist by the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (Catechism, 2042).

As Catholics, we are **obligated to confess mortal sins (sins involving grave/serious matter, done with full knowledge and consent), before we can receive Holy Communion.** Although the language of "obligation" makes some resist, please remember that this is hardly an affliction, but a solemn reminder to be renewed in God's mercy!

We're so blessed to have this source of grace and mercy. We receive forgiveness of serious sins, as well as less serious (venial) sin. It may be humbling to speak our sins to another, but it is *miraculous* to hear God's love spoken, with assurance of His mercy! Jesus instituted this sacrament to provide such graces! (John 20:21-23)

**Please make time to prepare well and come back to His mercy, no matter how long it has been! If you are unsure of the steps, don't worry!** The priest will walk you through it. The **most important step** is to examine your conscience, so that you may know the sins you must confess.

On the reverse side, you will find an "examination of conscience" to help you prepare well for the sacrament. The purpose of this is not to cause discouragement, anxiety or shame, but to stimulate repentance and desire to be reconciled with the God ... who so loved the world that he gave His only Son!

***Be not afraid! Jesus, we trust in you!***

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### How to Go to Confession:

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross.
2. Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession.  
**YOU: Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was \_\_\_\_ ago.**
3. Confess your sins simply and peacefully.  
When you finish, you may say: **"I am sorry for these and all of my sins."**
4. The priest will speak to you and possibly offer some advice or encouragement.  
He will then give you a **penance to fulfill after your confession.**  
He will ask you to pray an Act of Contrition.
5. You will then pray the **Act of Contrition:** *(You may use your own words.)*  
**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You.  
And I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments,  
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 sin no more  
and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.**
6. The priest will then forgive your sins with the prayer of absolution.
7. After the absolution, you will join Father in giving thanks and praise to God....  
**PRIEST:** Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.  
**YOU:** His mercy endures forever.  
**PRIEST:** The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.  
**YOU:** Thanks be to God!

## **EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

### **1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**

- ☆Do I sometimes live as though God does not exist?  
Do I put anything above God? Do I pray daily? Have I loved God with all my heart, soul and strength?
- ☆Have I had any involvement with the occult, witchcraft, wicca, Ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, new age crystals, Reiki or fortune telling? Have I put faith in horoscopes?
- ☆Have I received Holy Communion in mortal sin?
- ☆Have I abused the Sacrament of Penance by lying to the priest or deliberately not confessing a mortal sin?
- ☆Have I denied a truth of the faith?

### **2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

- ☆ Have I used God's Holy Name irreverently?
- ☆ Have I blasphemed God, the Church, the saints or sacred places or things?

### **3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.**

- ☆ Have I skipped Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day without serious reason?
- ☆ Do I keep Sunday as a day of prayer and rest? Or do I treat Sunday as any other day?
- ☆Have I deliberately come late or left early from Mass without a good reason?

### **4. Honor your father and your mother.**

- ☆Do I honor and respect my parents? Have I deliberately hurt my parents?
- ☆Do I treat my children with love and respect?
- ☆Have I neglected family duties?
- ☆Do I show respect for my lawful superiors?

### **5. You shall not kill.**

- ☆Have I deliberately harmed anyone?
- ☆Have I had an abortion or encouraged an abortion?  
Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it?
- ☆Have I abused drugs or alcohol?
- ☆Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?

### **6. You shall not commit adultery.**

#### **For the married**

- ☆Am I faithful to my spouse in thought and action?  
Have I used artificial contraception, or been sterilized?
- ☆Was I married outside the Church without proper permission of the Bishop?

#### **For the unmarried**

- ☆Have I engaged in sexual activity with anyone of either sex?

#### **For all**

- ☆Have I deliberately viewed pornographic magazines, videos or websites?
- ☆Have I masturbated?
- ☆ Have I used impure language or told impure jokes?  
Do I dress immodestly or lead others into temptation?

### **7. You shall not steal.**

- ☆Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods?
- ☆Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others?  
Have I cheated anyone of what I owe?
- ☆Do I gamble excessively?
- ☆Do I share what I have with the poor and the Church according to my means?

### **8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

- ☆Have I lied? Have I sworn falsely?
- ☆Have I plagiarized or been academically dishonest?
- ☆Have I gossiped? Have I revealed secrets or confidential information without good reason?
- ☆Have I ruined the good name of others by spreading lies or needlessly revealing their faults and sins?

### **9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.**

- ☆Have I deliberately and consciously permitted sexual thoughts about anyone besides my spouse?
- ☆Do I guard my imagination and senses?
- ☆Have I watched shows, pictures or movies that contain impure scenes with the deliberate intention of being aroused?

### **10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.**

- ☆Am I envious of the possessions, abilities, talents, beauty, or success of others?

### **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

- ☆Do I love my neighbor? Is there anyone whom I refuse to love? Have I wished harm on anyone?
- ☆Do I forgive from my heart those who have hurt me?  
Do I harbor hatred or grudges? Do I pray for my enemies?
- ☆Have I ridiculed or humiliated others?
- ☆Do I seek to help others in need?
- ☆Do I love myself as God loves me? Do I care for my physical, emotional, and spiritual health?
- ☆Do I forgive myself for my sins after bringing them to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

### **Precepts of the Church**

- ☆We are obligated to keep holy the Lord's Day by attending Mass each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. Have I deliberately missed Mass without a serious reason?
- ☆Have I gone to confession at least once a year when I have serious sins to confess?
- ☆If eligible, do I receive Holy Communion, at least once during Easter time?
- ☆Do I abstain from meat on Fridays in Lent (14+) and fast on one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (ages 18-59)? Do I fast for one hour before Holy Communion (water and medicine allowed)?
- ☆Do I contribute to support the material needs of the Church?