

How Do I Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

1. Preparation is important.

Review the Examination of Conscience on the reverse side or in some other way think through what you need healing and forgiveness for. If you have a Scripture reading from the upcoming Sunday that speaks to you, bring it in with you.

2. Enter the Reconciliation room.

Go face-face if possible, so that a sense of shared communal prayer can be experienced, although either the penitent or priest has the option to stay behind a screen.

3. Greet the priest, make the sign of the cross.

If the priest prays a short prayer, end with "Amen."

4. Share the reading from Scripture you've chosen or listen as the priest reads from the Bible.

5. Confess your sins, beginning with how long since last celebrating the sacrament.

Accept the penance assigned to you. If unclear about it, ask the priest to clarify.

6. Express your sorrow.

You may pray any form of a prayer of sorrow, as long as it expresses aloud that one is sorry for one's sins. If you prefer to use a standard prayer the following Act of Contrition is suggested:

"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."

7. Open yourself to the healing and mercy of God

As the priest places a hand on or over your head and prays the absolution:

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

8. If the priest ends with "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good," respond "His mercy endures forever."

9. When the priest dismisses you with "Go in peace" respond "Thanks be to God"

10. Take a few minutes in quiet prayer outside the room of reconciliation.

Examination of Conscience Based on the Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name...

- Do I believe that since my Baptism I have been called & chosen as 'a beloved son/daughter of God'?
- Do I take time for joining the Christian community in Sunday liturgy?
- Do I take time for rest from my labors so as to remember that God is the source and giver of all?

Thy Kingdom come...

- Have I been preoccupied and self-absorbed, forgetting those around me?
- Do I see myself as helping to build up the Kingdom of God along with others and the Lord?
- Am I respectful of the earth, God's creation?

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

- Am I respectful of the earth, God's creation?
- Have I done all that is possible to prevent unnecessary suffering / do I fight against injustice?

Give us this day our daily bread...

- Do I nourish myself daily on the Word of God?
- Has my selfishness turned our bread into my bread?
- Am I concerned about the hunger of others—in far off lands and close at hand?

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

- Do I judge others?
- Do I actively practice forgiveness, following the model of Jesus?
- Do I pray, "Father, forgive those who hurt me"?

And lead us not into temptation...

- Do I accept responsibility for not avoiding temptations?
- Have I been a source of sin for another?

But Deliver us from evil...

- Do I cooperate with God's plan of mercy by breaking the cycle of revenge?
- Do I try to conquer evil with goodness or do I ignore it and hope it just goes away?

A General Examination of Conscience

Look at your relationships: with God, the world around you, closer relationships of family, friends, co-workers, and your own inner heart. Where are you at peace? Where are your relationships broken, fragile, indifferent? Where and for what do you need forgiveness and healing?

Family, Friends, Co-Workers:

Whom do I affect by my words, attitudes, moods, actions? Where, when and to whom do I bring happiness and joy? To whom have I brought hurt, indifference, bitterness, or envy? What people in my life am I truly thankful for? Have I let them know that? Do I love others for their own sake or only because they love me?

The World Around Us:

What do I like about this world? Where do I discover beauty in it? Do I contribute to the goodness of the world? Is the world a more peace-filled place because of me? Is it more just? Do I take responsibility for how I spend my money and how I invest it? Do the poor and those struggling to survive have a claim on my resources? Do I acknowledge my prejudices and fears? What is my responsibility to the community in which I live?

Ourselves:

Where am I at peace within myself? Where am I anxious or upset? Where do I hurt because of something another said or did to me? Where do I carry guilt for what I've done? Am I afraid to believe in myself and my own goodness? Am I honest, compassionate, worthy of trust?

God:

How do I allow God to enter into my life, my decisions, my behavior? Do I struggle to live a life patterned on the life, example, and values of Jesus Christ? Do I experience God in my life? Do I pray? Do I believe God can and does love me? What is my relationship to the Church and to my fellow Christians? Do I really want to be reconciled to others and to God? Am I willing to open my life to a change of heart, a conversion, and to place the Lord at the center of my life?