

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION/PENANCE

True repentance has three elements:

1. **Contrition or sorrow for sin.** This can be obtained only at the foot of the Cross. We may not have an emotion of sorrow, but when we see what our sins have done to Jesus, we shall be sorry.
2. **Confession of all known sin.** This involves a careful examination of our conscience. We cannot confess our sins until we see exactly how we look to the all-seeing eye of God.
3. **Satisfaction and Amendment of life.** We must intend to lead a new or better life. This intention is shown by our acceptance and performance of the penances imposed by the Priest in confession.

Before examining your conscience, say this prayer:

O Holy Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding and of knowledge, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me, and help me now to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before your judgment-seat. Bring to my mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by self-love. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, knowing how deeply they have wounded the loving Heart of my Heavenly Father; and help me to make a good confession that all stain of guilt may be washed away in the Precious Blood of my Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Think of yourself as God's son/daughter, His child, and in the wickedness of following Satan rather than your loving Father.

Do not be in a hurry, and do not worry because you cannot remember everything. Be honest with God and with yourself; this all God asks of you.

Do not fret about your sins. Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned.

“A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, you shall not despise.”

(Psalm 51:17)

Examination of Conscience

Love of God

- ❖ Do I love God?
- ❖ Do I make an idol of money, possessions or sex?
- ❖ Do I blaspheme by taking the Name of the Lord in vain?
- ❖ Do I study and listen to the Word of God and try to obey God’s commandments?
- ❖ Do I go to Mass regularly on Sundays and Holy Days? (in Canada that is all Sundays and Christmas Day and New Year’s Day).
- ❖ Do I keep Sunday as a holy day, avoiding all unnecessary work?
- ❖ Do I say my prayers regularly?
- ❖ Do I receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin or without the necessary preparation?

Love of Neighbour

- ❖ Have I hated others?
- ❖ Do I love my family and friends?
- ❖ Have I been faithful to my spouse?
- ❖ Have I been kind and helpful to my children?
- ❖ Have I honoured my mother and father? (Honour is a quality that combines love, respect and being proud of and honest with them)
- ❖ Do I contribute my share of my treasure to the Church? Do I tithe? Tithing is recommended and means giving to God 10% of one’s income. At the minimum do I give at least one hourly wage?
- ❖ Do I contribute my share of my time to the Church? This would be works of service and/or time spent in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.
- ❖ Do I contribute my share of my talent to the Church? Am I generous with the gifts God has given me? My singing voice, reading well in public, altar

serving, pastoral caring, visiting the sick, volunteering at the Drop-in Centre etc.

- ❖ Do I contribute to the needs of those less fortunate?
- ❖ Have I lived up to my promises made at Baptism and Confirmation?
- ❖ Am I a peacemaker and an example to others of Christian living?
- ❖ Do I speak up for my beliefs and principles as a Christian?
- ❖ Do I encourage my family and children to live a Christian life?
- ❖ Do I give gentle correction when they are not?
- ❖ Do I visit the bereaved, the lonely, those who are sick and unable to get out?
- ❖ Have I respected the integrity of creation – animals and nature?
- ❖ Have I stolen from others?
- ❖ Have I cheated my spouse, my employer, my employee or others?
- ❖ Have I made restitution of what I have stolen?
- ❖ Have I damaged others' good name?
- ❖ Have I been quarrelsome?
- ❖ Have I thought ill of others and used others for my own ends?
- ❖ Have I exploited others sexually? (paid for sex or viewed pornography)
- ❖ Do I strive to forgive those who have hurt me or do I hold on to resentments and the desire for revenge?

❖ **The Way of Perfection**

- ❖ Do I fast and abstain from red meat as required by the Church? (That is on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and all Fridays of the year.)
- ❖ Do I practice self control over my emotions and actions?
- ❖ Have I followed what my conscience tells me?
- ❖ Have I tried to acquire habits of wisdom and understanding?
- ❖ Have I wallowed in self-pity?
- ❖ Have I allowed myself to be consumed by ambition, bitterness or disappointment?
- ❖ Have I wasted my money?
- ❖ Have I kept my word?
- ❖ Have I been proud or arrogant?
- ❖ Have I been vain?
- ❖ Have I coveted other people's possessions or status?
- ❖ Have I indulged impurity? (pornography, masturbation, sexual fantasies)
- ❖ Have I been envious of others?
- ❖ Have I been greedy, angry, lazy, indifferent?
- ❖ Do I truly seek first the kingdom of God in my life and place my trust in Him?

Review of How to go to Confession

Five Steps for a Good Confession

1. Examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Confess your sins.
4. Resolve to amend your life.
5. After your confession do the penance the priest assigns.

How to Go to Confession: (the highlighted parts are what you say.)

Make the Sign of the Cross.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Say these customary or similar words: Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ since my last Confession. These are my sins.

(List the specific sins which you have committed since your last confession. Tell your sins with sufficient detail so the priest will understand, but without needless details. Speak so that the priest will hear and understand you, but not so loudly that others will overhear your confess. Confess only your sins and not the sins of someone else.)

Finish with: For these and all the sins of my life I am truly sorry and ask pardon from God and you, Father. (This is so that any sins you may have forgotten, that don't come to mind, just now, are also forgiven.)

After mentioning of the sins which you offer to the Lord for forgiveness and whatever spiritual counselling the priest gives you, the priest will give you a penance. The penance is usually a prayer, scripture reading or an act that the priests give you to do to externally demonstrate to God that you are sincerely sorry for your sins. Then the priest will ask you to say your Act of Contrition. You then would say the following or an Act of Contrition prayer which you have learned. Don't worry if you don't know one, the priest will help you with it by having a copy to help you or even better bring this along with you and read from it.

Act of Contrition. (*one of the following or another that you have learned.*)

O my God I am heartily sorry for having offended you. I detest all my sins most sincerely. Not only because by them, I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of

hell, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are so good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace never more to offend you, to do my penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Or

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to 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 Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my god, have mercy. Amen.

Or

O my God, I am sorry for my sins because I have offended you. I know I should love you above all things. Help me to do penance, to do better and to avoid anything that might lead me to sin. Amen.

Or

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner.

The priest will then pray the following prayer of absolution in which the Lord washes you clean of your sins”

God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son, has sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sin. Through the ministry of the Church may God grant you pardon and peace and I absolve you of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then the priest will say:

Your sins are all forgiven. Go in the peace of Christ.

You respond: Thanks be to God.