

EXPERIENCE GOD'S MERCY

Returning to the Sacrament of 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. 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.

Every time we go to confession,
God embraces us.
- Pope Francis -

FOUR STEPS TO RECONCILIATION

Step 1: Contrition

Contrition is "sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again."

Step 2: Confession

The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with other

Step 3: Absolution

The priest speaks the words by which "God, the Father of Mercies" reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the Cross.

Step 4: Satisfaction

An important part of our healing is the "penance" the priest imposes in reparation for our sins.

STEP 1: CONTRITION

Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation.

Before we enter the Confessional, we should begin with prayer. Reflect on 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.

How to Make an Examination of Conscience

1. Begin with a prayer asking for God's help.
2. Review your life with the help of questions based on the Ten Commandments. There are various types of examinations of conscience but regardless of which one you use to prepare yourself for the Sacrament it should be rooted in Scripture; particularly, the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes.
3. Tell God how truly sorry you are for your sins.
4. Make a firm resolution not to sin again.

If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, ask the priest to help you - this is part of what he became a priest to do. Place your trust in God - our Heavenly Father is merciful. And remember that God loves you - he wants to give you this free gift of his mercy and his love.

STEP 2: CONFESSION

Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Mercy is the force that reawakens us to
new life and instils in us the courage
to look to the future with hope.
- Pope Francis -

1. Enter the Confessional

The Sacrament of 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.

2. Begin your confession

When you enter the confessional, the priest will give you a blessing or greeting. He may also share a brief Scripture passage. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, "Bless me Father for I have sinned, It has been [X days, weeks, years] since my last confession."

3. Confess your sins

Confess all of your mortal sins to the priest in number and kind. Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church. Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful.

4. After you have confessed all of your sins Say:

"I am sorry for these and all of my sins." The priest will then offer you advice to help you be a better Catholic, such as how to better work with the graces that God is giving you in your life, or ways to combat your weaknesses or habitual sin. He will then assign a penance.

5. Say an Act of Contrition

This is a way of expressing your sorrow for your sins.

Oh my 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.

The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

STEP 3: ABSOLUTION

Restoration of friendship with God.

When the priest absolves you, he will say these words:

*God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and the 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*

For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, Reconciliation is usually followed by peace and serenity.

STEP 4: SATISFACTION

Completing the penance imposed by the priest

When one finishes Confession one leaves free, grand, beautiful, forgiven, candid, happy. This is the beauty of Confession!
- Pope Francis -

Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must "make satisfaction for" or "expiate" his sins.

This satisfaction is also called "penance."

Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 4, VII - The Acts of the Penitent and Article V, IX - The Effects of This Sacrament, quotes from the General Audience of Pope Francis, February 19, 2014