

# RECONCILIATION

## A SHORT GUIDE

[www.thelightison.org](http://www.thelightison.org)



The sacrament of Reconciliation is the story of God's love that never turns away from us.



[www.padrepioministry.org](http://www.padrepioministry.org)

## How To Go To Confession

1. The priest gives a blessing or greeting.
2. You make the Sign of the Cross and say: "*Bless me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...* (give approximate number of weeks, months, or years).
3. Confess all your sins (especially mortal sins) to the priest. If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.
4. End by saying: "*I am sorry for these and all my sins.*"
5. The priest may offer advice to help you become a better Catholic, and then he gives you a penance.
6. You then say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins.

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

## What is Reconciliation?

When we sin, we hurt ourselves by wounding our relationships with God and our neighbors. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Confession or Penance), God offers us forgiveness of our sins, and we accept and receive God's forgiveness by sincerely expressing our sorrow, by acknowledging and making reparation for our sins, and by resolving to do better in the future. The Sacrament of Reconciliation has four parts:

- **Contrition:** A sincere sorrow for having offended God, and the most important act of the person confessing. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.
- **Confession:** Naming our sins aloud to the priest who represents Christ and the Church.
- **Penance:** The priest gives us prayers, or sometimes good deeds, for our healing and the healing of those we have hurt by our sins.
- **Absolution:** The words the priest speaks by which "God, the Father of mercies" reconciles us to himself through His death and resurrection.

# EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

## 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have other gods before me.

**Putting God First:** Has God been the source, center and hope of my life? Have I put myself, anyone or anything before God? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation or thing? Have I failed to trust in God, His love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God and to worship Him faithfully? Have I doubted the Christian faith? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversities? Have I sinned against God by believing in New Age, Scientology, Astrology, Horoscopes, Fortune-telling, Superstition or engaging in the Occult? Did I endanger my Catholic Faith or cause scandal by associating with anti-Catholic groups & associations (e.g., the Freemasons)?

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

**Respect for God:** Do I have a deep and sincere respect for God and His Holy Name? Have I shown disrespect to God, either in word or deed? Have I dishonored God's Name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn promise or vow that was done before God? Have I cursed or used foul language?

## 3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

**Respect for the Lord's Day:** Have I worshiped God faithfully on all Sundays and major holy days of obligation? Have I helped others to do the same, or have I discouraged them? Have I spent the Lord's Day in holy and edifying ways? Have I made time for family and friends?

## 4. Honor your father and mother.

**Respect Parents & Authority:** Have I loved and respected my parents as I should? Have I neglected them, or failed to help them? Have I disobeyed them, deceived them or caused them pain by my words and deeds? Have I treated my family members with patience and love? Have I respected my teachers, superiors, employers (those who are in authority) as I should? Have I disobeyed or deceived them by my words or deeds? Have I treated fairly all those who have worked for me?

## 5. You shall not kill.

**Respect for Human Life:** Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone, including assisted suicide? Have I had an abortion or helped someone in procuring an abortion? Have I wished my own or anyone's harm or death? Have I caused others to sin? Have I abused my health or the health of others by evil and intemperate living (i.e. drugs, alcohol, etc.)? Have I given way to anger or hatred, or sought revenge? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against them? Have I been cruel to anyone?

## 6&9. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

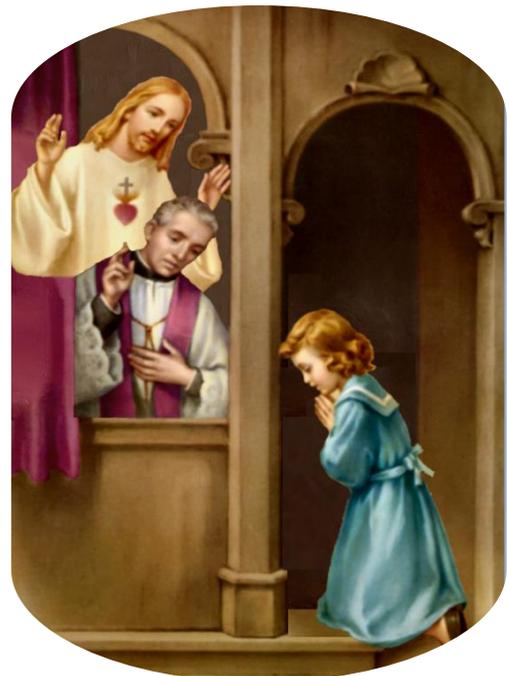
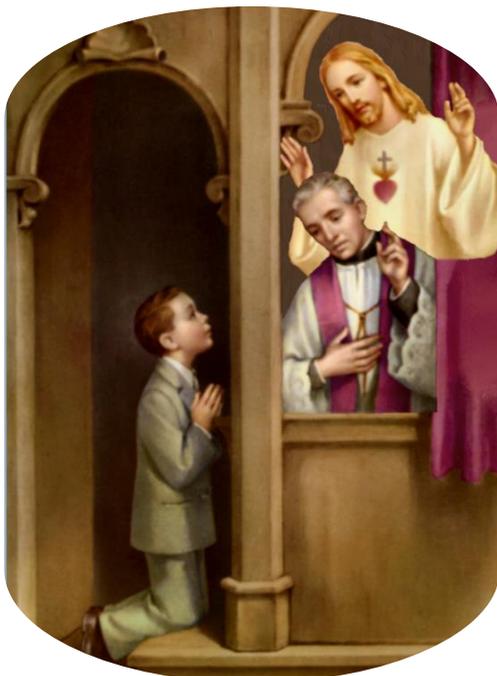
**Respect for Marriage:** Have I committed any sin of lust, alone or with others (masturbation, fornication, adultery)? Have I caused others to commit impure acts? Have I sinned by giving way to impure thoughts, words or conversations? Have I read immoral books or magazines, or watched immoral movies or shows. Have I delighted in obscenity of any kind? Have I associated with bad company or frequented places of ill-repute? Do I maintain modesty and decency in dress? Have I practiced birth control/contraception?

## 7 & 10. You shall not steal. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

**Respect for Private Property:** Have I taken or kept anything that was not mine? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I damaged or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of their rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Do I give alms according to my capacity? Have I looked with envy, jealousy or hatred toward the possessions, talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit?

## 8. You shall not bear false witness.

**Respect for Truth:** Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I spoken evil, told lies, or spread rumors about anyone? Have I unjustly accused someone? Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of another? Have I betrayed the confidence of another? Have I made careless statements or done anything else to harm the good name and reputation of another person? Have I engaged in idle gossip, (discussing that which is doubtful as if it were true), hearsay and backbiting?



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?**

This Sacrament is one of the seven outward signs of grace instituted by Christ and given to the Church, and provides an opportunity for a person to receive God's forgiveness, pardon for their sins, and reconciliation with God and His Church. Confession is when we tell our sins to the priest. Penance is the action that the priest gives us to do or say to express our gratitude for God's forgiveness. Finally, we experience reconciliation when the priest absolves us of our sins, which repairs our relationship with God and the Church. Because reconciliation is the fruit of the sacrament, this is the name the Church prefers for the sacrament.

## **What if I am embarrassed?**

Feeling embarrassment is normal and is a sign that you know that you have done something wrong. The priest is there to listen to you with the heart of Jesus. Jesus came to love and forgive and never seeks to embarrass us. Priests have heard many sins confessed to them and are prepared to offer spiritual counsel and absolution. The priest will listen to you with understanding, not embarrassment or judgment.

## **Why should I confess my sins to a priest, instead of asking God for forgiveness on my own ?**

Asking for forgiveness is an important first step in repairing our relationship with God and others. However, sin damages not only your relationship with God but also your relationship with others and the Church. The priest hearing your confession acts as Christ present to you, offering God's mercy and forgiveness. In this way, the priest carries on the healing ministry that Jesus entrusted to his apostles when he shared with them his power to forgive sins (John 20:23). The priest cannot and will not tell anyone about anything you said during your confession. In fact, the Church requires that the priest keep secret anything you confess to him.

## **How can I prepare to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?**

Examine your conscience. Think about both the times that you have intentionally done something wrong and the times that you chose not to do something for the good of another person. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) are helpful tools for examining your conscience.