

How to Go to Confession

1. PREPARATION: Begin with prayer and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions— neglected to live Christ’s commands to love God and your neighbor? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Mt 5:3-10).

2. GREETING AND BEGINNING: The priest will welcome you and might say a short prayer. After making the Sign of the Cross, you may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession [or “This is my first Confession.”]. And my sins are...”

3. CONFESSION: Confess all your sins to the priest. Be sure to list grave sins by kind and number (i.e. “I looked at indecent pictures twice”). If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

4. PENANCE: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

5. ACT OF CONTRITION: After the priest has given your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

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.
(Order of Penance, no. 92)

6. ABSOLUTION: The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution:

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God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and poured out the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the church may God grant 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. (Order of Penance, no. 46)

You respond, "Amen."

7. PRAISE: The priest will usually praise the mercy of God by saying "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good." And your response would be, "His mercy endures forever" (Order of Penance, no. 47).

8. DISMISSAL: The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, "Go in peace."

Common Prayers Given as Penance

Our Father

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against
us;
and lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is
with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for
us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death,
Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the
Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end.