

How to Go to Confession

Preparation

Before going to Confession, prepare for the sacrament by reflecting of the last confession you gave and if have your thoughts, words, or actions opposed God between your last confession and now. Then review an examination of conscience.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

The penitent and the priest begin with the sign of the Cross, saying:

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

The priest urges the penitent to have confidence in God with these or similar words:

May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess your sins with true sorrow.

The priest may read or say a passage from Sacred Scripture after which the penitent then states:

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (however many days, weeks, months, or years) since my last confession.

Confess all the sins you can remember to the priest. If you are unsure of what to say, ask the priest for help. Do not try and justify the sins you have committed or beat around the bush. In the confessional there is no judgement, but only forgiveness. For the confession to be valid, the penitent must confess all the mortal sins that they are aware of having committed since the last confession, be sorry for them, and have a strong intention to try not to commit the same sins in the future. When you are finished confessing the sins you can recall, say these or similar words:

For these and all of my sins, I am sorry.

At this point the priest will often give advice on how to try and avoid the occasion of sin as well as give a penance. Then he will ask the penitent to say the Act of Contrition.

O My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and in failing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with the help of your grace, 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, O Lord, have mercy.

Then the priest will absolve the penitent with the following words:

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

The penitent makes the sign of the Cross and answers:

Amen.

The priest will then dismiss the penitent with a short prayer and encouragement. The penitent should then try to fulfill the penance imposed if it is something that can be done more quickly.