

GOING TO CONFESSION

The sacrament of Penance is also known as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this sacrament, we examine our life and we seek forgiveness for those things, those actions that keep us from letting the Lord more deeply in our heart.

Many people have avoided celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, sometimes for years at a time, because they "don't know what to do." The following brief explanation is intended for a person who has not been to confession in some time or for an adult who is going for the first time. It explains how the first form of the Sacrament of Penance may be celebrated. The person who is going to confession is called a "penitent" because he or she wishes to do penance and to turn away from sin.

PREPARATION Before going to confession, the penitent compares his or her life with the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the example of Christ and then prays to God for forgiveness.

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1) The Sign of the Cross 2) Greeting - *Peace be with you!* **Response:** *And also with you.*

THE WORD OF GOD Scripture these past Sundays is filled with the message to repent and prepare for the coming of Christ. How are you preparing? For what do you need God's mercy and forgiveness?

CONFESSION OF SINS The priest then offers suitable advice to help the penitent begin a new life and, when appropriate, leads him or her to resolve to make appropriate restitution for the harm he or she has caused others. The priest imposes an act of penance or satisfaction on the penitent.

THE PRAYER OF THE PENITENT After this, the penitent prays a prayer expressing sorrow for his or her sins and resolving not to sin again. A card with several examples of the prayer may be provided in the confessional. The penitent may recite the prayer by heart or read it.

Prayer of the Penitent: *Act of Contrition*

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.

Absolution by the Priest

Following this prayer, the priest extends his hands, or at least his right hand, over the head of the penitent and pronounces the formula of absolution. As he says the final words he makes the sign of the cross over the head of the penitent:

Proclamation of Praise

Priest: *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!*
Response: *It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

Dismissal of the Penitent

Priest: *Go in the peace of Christ.*
Response: *Thanks be to God.*