

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

The fruitfulness of the celebration of the sacraments depends greatly on the way you prepare and celebrate them. As you wait in line, take advantage of the time to prepare your heart to receive God's mercy in the sacrament of confession.

BEFORE

Examine your conscience:

Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your conscience. Ask three main questions:

1. What have I done (actions, words, thoughts) or failed to do (omissions)?
2. Why have I done it? (Try to discover the root of your sins.) If it helps, you can write down your sins on a piece of paper. (Destroy it after your confession—those sins are blotted out!)
3. Is there anything that I have never confessed? Confessing something you have never confessed will bring you deeper freedom.

In order to form your conscience and know how to examine it well, you can look online at different examinations of conscience according to different patterns (for example, the 10 commandments, the 7 capital sins).

It will help you to prepare your confession more easily if you begin

to examine your conscience on a daily basis before you go to bed.

Pray for the grace of

repentance: Identify the main sin and make an act of renunciation. "In the name of Jesus, I renounce the spirit of _____."

"Interior repentance is a radical re-orientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with a repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed... and a desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy, and trust in his help." Catechism of Catholic Church, 431

Read Scripture: Choose a passage that speaks about God's mercy, for example, Lk 15, Psalm 51, Jn. 8:1–11, Lk 5:17–26, Lk. 19:1–10. Those words become real in the sacrament of confession.

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DURING

GREET the priest. To begin your confession say, “Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. These are my sins...”

CONFESS your sins with clarity. Avoid two extremes: checklist confession or telling a story for each sin you confess. Try to open up your soul with confidence as if you are speaking to Jesus. As you confess, you might ask for direction or advice if there’s something you don’t know how to change.

BE CONTRITE. (The priest might give you some advice or penance before the act of contrition). Let the words you say with your lips in the act of contrition touch your heart:

AFTER

GIVE THANKS. You are like the prodigal son; the Father has given you a new ring and a new robe, and restored your identity as a child of God. Consequently, as you do after holy communion, spend some time in thanksgiving: your sins have been forgiven and graces have been given to you.

DO PENANCE. Fulfill the penance given by the confessor as soon as possible.

AMMEND YOUR LIFE. Put into practice the means to change in one area of your life, and try to avoid future occasions of sin.

Act of Contrition

O 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. With Your help I will do penance, sin no more and avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for me; in His Name, my God, have mercy.

RECEIVE absolution with faith and devotion. Through the words of absolution, the Lord is purifying your soul, forgiving your sins, and giving you many graces. Receive it with faith! It may help to open your hands like a beggar who is in need of God’s riches.

For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation “is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.” Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true “spiritual resurrection,” restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God. CCC 1468.

For more confession resources go to the section ‘spiritual toolbox’ at stmichaelportland.org

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