

How do I make a good confession?

Confession not only frees us from our sins, it also conveys grace. This grace is what aids us in our spiritual journey to holiness.

Sin damages our relationships and imperils our soul. Serious sin enslaves us preventing us from reaching our potential as disciples of Christ. Genuine sorrow for our sinfulness leads us to seek the grace that is needed to turn our lives around. The Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation is our way of experiencing this grace through God's mercy and love.

"Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven..." John 20:19

When Jesus entrusted to Peter the Keys of the Kingdom he empowered the Church through apostolic ministry to be the catalyst for the binding and loosing of sins. That is to say, Christ entrusted Peter and his successors with the authority to assure sinners who were contrite and desired God's forgiveness that through the ministry of the Church this forgiveness would be theirs. When we participate in the Sacrament of Confession and do so with full intent to amend our lives and with humility perform penance, we are restored in heart and soul and reconciled to God and the community of faith.

What do I say when I go to confess my sins?

The celebration of this sacrament begins with an examination of conscience. A good tool for this exercise is the Ten Commandments (see below) or an examination of [conscience tool](#). It is helpful to make a list in an effort to be as thorough as possible. Remember that confession is like cleaning the house; you want to make sure that you do as good a job as possible. After completing an examination of conscience, you are ready to take part in the celebration of the sacrament.

When you enter the confessional you are given the choice of kneeling behind the screen or sitting face to face with the priest. Choose whichever makes you most comfortable.

If you are celebrating face to face the priest may welcome you and invite you into the sacrament. You will begin by making the sign of the Cross and saying:

Bless me, father, for I have sinned.

It has been (estimate the time since your last confession) since my last confession.

The priest will then invite you to recount your sins.

Upon completion you may say:

For these and all my sins I am sincerely sorry and resolve to do penance and avoid these sins in the future.

The priest will offer words of spiritual encouragement and assign the appropriate penance. He will then pronounce the absolution with these words:

God the Father of mercies through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the

world to himself and sent to Holy Spirit to us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace and I absolve you of all your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The penitent will say an Act of Contrition and after leaving the confessional will perform the penance that has been given.

Act of Contrition

My God, I am heartily sorry for all 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.

How often should I avail myself of this sacrament?

Frequent confession - once a month or so - keeps us spiritually healthy. The Church requires that we confess our sins at least once annually. The penitential seasons of Advent and Lent provide good opportunities to celebrate the sacrament with the whole parish community.

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.