

Guide to Receiving the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

+ **Step 1:** Examine your conscience. Think through the Ten Commandments and pray to the Holy Spirit for help in recognizing your sins.

+ **Step 2:** Enter the confessional. Then make the Sign of the Cross and tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession.

Say: *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

Say: *“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ [amount of time] since my last confession.” (Or: “This is my first confession.”)*

+ **Step 3:** Confess your sins to the priest. Tell him every sin you can remember since your last confession (especially any mortal sin). You don’t have to go into a lot of detail, but tell the priest specifically what you have done, or failed to do, and how often.

+ **Step 4:** The priest may give you a few words of comfort. He may also give you some advice about how to avoid sin in the future.

+ **Step 5:** The priest will give you a penance to complete after you leave the confessional.

+ **Step 6:** The priest will ask you to pray an Act of Contrition. There are many forms of this prayer. You may choose to pray this one:

Say: *O my God, I am sorry for my sins. In choosing to sin, and failing to do good, I have sinned against you and your Church. I firmly intend, with the help of your Son, to make up for my sins, and to love as I should. Amen.*

+ **Step 7:** The priest will extend his hands over you or place his hand on your head or shoulders. Then he will speak the words of absolution:

The priest says: *“God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the 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.”* (CCC 1449)

While the priest says, *“I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen,”* make the Sign of the Cross.

+ **Step 8:** You have now been forgiven of your sins and reconciled with God and the Church! Thanks be to God! Return to your seat in the church or chapel. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His gift of forgiveness! Do your penance right away if you are able to. If you can't do the penance you were given right away, make a plan to do it as soon as possible.