

How to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation

Before you go to confession:

- 1) Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember what you have done wrong and to help you know that God is always forgiving.
- 2) Examine your conscience. Look over your life and think about the things that you need to change.

When you get to church:

- 1) Find the reconciliation room (confessional).
- 2) Decide if you want to kneel behind the screen or sit face to face.
- 3) Let the priest begin. Make the Sign of the Cross with him.
- 4) Start with ***Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession. These are my sins....***
- 5) Tell the priest what you want to confess.
- 5) After you have told the priest all your sins, finish with ***For these, and all the sins of my past life, I am truly sorry.***
- 6) You may talk with the priest a little about what you have brought up.
- 7) Say an Act of Contrition when the priest invites you to.
- 7) Pray silently while the priest gives you absolution. Make the Sign of the Cross with him.

After your confession:

- 1) Spend a little time in church thanking God for the gift of forgiveness.
- 2) Do whatever penance you were given. Remember that penance - if it is prayer or a good deed to perform - is so that you can practice living a better life.

Using an Examination of Conscience

1. Do I honor God above everything else? Do I ask God's help in my decisions? Do I pray to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Do I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday?
4. Do I obey the adults who care for me?
5. Do I take care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise?
6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
7. Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
8. Have I taken what is not mine?
9. Have I told the truth?
10. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?
11. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
12. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
13. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and school communities?
14. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

How do you use this list?

At the end of the day, maybe when you are in bed, examine your conscience like this:

- Say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you to remember the day and see it clearly.
- Go over the list.
- If you find things that you have done, you can pray to ask God's forgiveness.
- And you can pray to do better tomorrow.

In order to get in the habit of doing this, begin this week. After awhile, you won't need to look at the list. You can just talk over your day with God.

An Examination of Conscience for Adults

Many of us remember long lists, based on the Commandments, which we used to find out if we had sinned. Sin is not always a question of "breaking a rule," but of our attitudes and patterns of behavior.

At the same time, reflecting on our actions in light of the Commandments and the teachings of the church can be helpful in calling us to change our lives and to live more fully as disciples of the Lord.

The following list can be used as a guide. Ideally, we should examine our conscience every day. As you begin to reflect on this list, say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you to remember what you have done and to help you to see it clearly.

1. Have I honored God above everything else? Have I ignored God's guidance in making my decisions? Have I neglected praying to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Have I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays?
4. Have I cared for my parents and other adults in my family? Have I cared for my children and grandchildren in a responsible way? Have I failed to look at someone lovingly, or have I seen them as a burden or a bother?
5. Have I failed to take good care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise? Have I abused drugs or alcohol?
6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
7. Have I been faithful in my marriage? Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
8. Have I been responsible in the exercise of my sexuality? Have I respected others in my relationships?
9. Have I taken what is not mine?
10. Have I told the truth?
11. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?
12. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
13. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
14. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and community?
15. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

This list covers most of the major areas of our lives. However, it is not exhaustive. As was stated above, it is important to look for patterns and habits of acting, as well as to look for specific offenses.

Acts of Contrition

There is no one “official” act of contrition. There are traditional ones which have been taught over the years, but it can be any prayer of sorrow for one’s sins. You are free to use any of these or to pray in your own words.

It can be short:

Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The prayer that many learned is as follows:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee and I detest all my sins because they offend you, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

The one that the children are learning is a contemporary version:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you who 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 Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.