

## WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Reconciliation (also known as Confession) is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in His love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time, sinners reconcile with the Church and the community, which are also wounded by our sins.

Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people, and our relationship with God. In Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and His Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and His Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future.

The forgiveness of sins involves four parts: contrition, confession, penance, and absolution.

- **Contrition:** a sincere sorrow for having offended God and the most important act of the penitent. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.
- **Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way by admitting them aloud to God through the priest.
- **Penance:** an important part of our healing process, the penance is imposed by the priest as the means for us to make reparation for our sins.
- **Absolution:** the priest speaks the words by which “God, the Father of Mercies” reconciles us - sinners - to Himself through the Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of His Son-Jesus Christ.

### RITE OF RECONCILIATION

1. The priest greets and gives a blessing to the penitent.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say “**Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...**” (give weeks, months, or years)
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.)
4. Say, “**I am sorry for these and all of my sins.**”
5. The priest assigns a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.
6. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.



## Roman Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg



To receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation,  
please contact your local parish priest.

To find a Catholic church near you,  
please visit  
[www.dosp.org](http://www.dosp.org)

Based on a brochure prepared by the  
Archdiocese of Washington

## A SHORT GUIDE TO

# THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

## WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

## HOW TO MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

## RITE OF RECONCILIATION

## ACT OF CONTRITION

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## HOW TO MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION

Confession is not difficult, but it does require some preparation.

We should begin with prayer, placing ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. We seek healing and forgiveness through repentance and resolve to sin no more.

Then we review our lives since our last confession, searching our memories for our thoughts, words, and actions that did not conform to God's love, to His law, or to the laws of His Church. This is called an examination of conscience.

To begin an examination of conscience:

- Find a place where you can be still and listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in your heart.
- Begin with a prayer asking for God's help.
- Review your life with the help of reflection on the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, Jesus's command to "love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37-39), and the questions we have provided to the right.

Then, while that examination is fresh in your mind, go to a priest and participate in the Rite of Reconciliation.

### THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. 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 the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
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 anything that belongs to your neighbor.
10. You shall not envy your neighbor.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Recall your sins. Prayerfully ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's and the Church's commandments. Here are some questions which may help you:

- Do I pray to God every day? Have I thanked God for His gifts to me? Did I put possessions before God?
- Did I put my faith in danger through readings hostile to the Catholic teachings or involvement in non-Catholic sects? Did I engage in superstitious practices such as palm-reading or fortune-telling?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse or take a false oath?
- Did I miss Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Did I keep fast and abstinence on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents and lawful superiors in important matters?
- Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Was I disrespectful?
- Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs?
- Did I consent to, recommend, advise or actively take part in an abortion?
- Did I willfully look at pornographic images, entertain impure thoughts, or engage in impure conversations? Did I use artificial means to prevent conception?
- Was I unfaithful to my spouse? Did I engage in sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Did I steal or damage another's property? Have I been honest and just in my business relations?
- Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor and respected the dignity of others?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by calumny, or detraction, of others? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters?
- Have I envied other people?

## RITE OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Please choose the option that is the most comfortable for you.

1. The priest greets and blesses you. He may share a brief Scripture passage as well.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say: "**Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...**" (Give the number of weeks, months, or years since your last confession.)
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. The priest will help you to make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or feel uneasy, please let the priest know and ask him to help you. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, our merciful Father, who wants to forgive you.
4. Following your confession of sins say: "**I am sorry for these and all of my sins.**"
5. The priest assigns you a penance and offers advice to help you to be a better Catholic.
6. Say an Act of Contrition (like the one below), expressing sorrow for your sins.
7. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

### ACT OF CONTRITION

*O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love.*

*I firmly resolve, with the help of your Grace, to do penance for these sins and to amend my life.*

*Amen.*