

Why go to Confession?

Sin is an offence against God, a break in our relationship with him. At the same time, it damages our relationship with the Church. For this reason, reconciliation needs both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church.

Only God forgives sins. Jesus says of himself, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and by virtue of his divine authority he has entrusted this power to the bishops and priests. The priest acts in the Person of Christ – when you confess your sins to him, it is as if Christ is right there who listens and grants you absolution.

During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them.

We can tend to focus too much on the sins and overlook the joy and happiness of having our sins forgiven. As we hear in the Gospel, there is great joy in heaven when one sinner repents.

Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all members of his Church. No one can truthfully say that they have no sin; all of us have sinned and fallen short of who we are called to be. Reconciliation is therefore a necessary part of living a Catholic life.

The 5 steps to make a good confession:

1. Know your sins – an examination of conscience can help you know your sins. Knowing our sins is important because God wants us to participate and be engaged in our redemption. He could forgive us without us asking, but he wants our cooperation with his grace; he won't redeem us without our cooperation. We need to know our sins to open our hearts to God's forgiveness.

2. Be sorry for your sins: one needs, at a minimum, to be sorry for sins because of the punishment due to sin. We can grow in contrition by meditating on the Passion of our Lord and our ingratitude in committing sins. Contrition often grows over time. If we don't have contrition, we may consider delaying our confession.

3. Make a sincere resolution and a plan to not sin again. Although it is almost certain that one will sin again, one must desire to avoid sin in the future. We can ask ourselves: what have I tried and what effort have I done to rid my life of this sin?

4. Tell your sins to the priest. See "*Rite of Confession*" in this pamphlet.

5. Do the penance and satisfaction (if necessary) that the priest assigns. One must do what is possible to repair the harm caused by sin.

Rite of Confession

1. The priest gives you a blessing or greeting.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say: "**Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...**" (number of weeks, months or years) "**and these are my sins:**"
3. Confess your sins to the priest with sincerity and humility. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. If the priest needs clarification, he will ask.
4. Following your confession of sins, say: "**I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life.**"
5. The priest will now give you advice how to avoid sin and grow in holiness. He will assign you a penance which should be completed as soon as you can.
6. Say an Act of Contrition, with these or similar words to express your sorrow for sin: **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. 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 me. In His Name, my God, have mercy. Amen.**
7. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins. Wait for the priest to finish, then thank him and complete your penance.

Guide to Confession



“Don't be afraid to go to the Sacrament of Confession, where you will meet Jesus who forgives you.”
Pope Francis

St. Paul the Apostle Parish
Burlington, ON

Examination of Conscience

Set aside some quiet time for reflection. Start by praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for help in making a good examination to prepare for Confession.

Read through the items on this list and honestly reflect on your behavior for each item.

Remember that sins are ways that you have knowingly offended God in word, action, or deed.

Use this examination based on the 10 commandments as a guide to help you see where you have offended God in your life.

Do I pray to God every day? Have I thanked God for His gifts to me? Has God been the focus of my life? Did I despair of God's mercy?

Did I put my faith in danger through readings contrary to Catholic teachings or involvement in non-Catholic sects? Did I engage in superstitious practices: palm-reading or fortune-telling? Have I placed my trust in false teachings or substitutes for God? Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse or take a false oath? Have I broken a solemn vow or promise?

Did I miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation through my own fault? Was I inattentive, or unnecessarily late for Mass, or did I leave early? Have I neglected prayer for a long time? Did I keep fast and abstinence on the prescribed days? Have I trusted God, especially in times of difficulty?

Did I disobey my parents and lawful superiors in important matters? Have I shown Christ-like respect to parents, spouse, family members, and legitimate authorities? Have I been attentive to the religious education and formation of my children?

Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Was I disrespectful? Was I impatient, angry, envious, proud, jealous, lazy? Have I been just in my responsibilities to employer and employees? Have I discriminated against others because of race or other reasons?

Have I harbored resentment and hatred in my thoughts? Have I imagined bad conversations to nurture my anger? Have I judged rashly? Have I plotted revenge? Have I sought to be a peace-maker? Have I been physically violent? Have I refused or been slow or ungracious in forgiving? Have I been impatient with people, events, sufferings, sicknesses?

Have I judged others? Ranked myself better than others? Judging: In thought, word, or deed? Have I refused to learn from others, or refused to admit I was wrong? Have I acted/joked/given talks more to impress others than to do God's will or to help others? Has my humor and conversation been self-seeking?

Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs? Have I cared for the bodily health and safety of myself and all others? Have I supported in any way abortion, "mercy killing," or suicide? Did I consent to, recommend, advise or actively take part in an abortion?

Did I wilfully look at pornography, entertain impure thoughts or engage in impure conversations or actions? Have I been chaste in thought and word? Have I used sex only within marriage with my spouse? Did I use any means to prevent conception? Have I given myself sexual gratification? Was I unfaithful to my spouse? Do I assist my spouse in growing in holiness? Have I permitted sexual thoughts about someone with whom I am not married?

Have I stolen or damaged anything that belongs to another person, my employer, or the government? If so, am I ready to repay it? Did I fulfill my contracts? Have I been honest and just in my business relations and taxes? Did I gamble, depriving my family of

necessities? Have I been overly concerned about my own comfort and well-being?

Did I tell lies? Did I sin by calumny (telling an untruth about someone), or detraction (telling a truth about someone that lessens their reputation)? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters? Have I spoken ill of any other person? Have I always told the truth? Have I kept secrets and confidences? Have I failed to defend the reputation of others?

Have I envied other people? Have I been mindful of the poor, giving freely from my abundance? Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor and respected the dignity of others? Do I accept God's will for me? Have I desired what belongs to other people? Have I wished ill on another?

Have I helped make my parish community stronger and holier? Have I contributed to the financial support of the Church? Have I neglected to use the talents that God has given me? Have I avoided my duty to deal with difficult people and situations?

Have I done penance by abstaining and fasting on obligatory days? Have I fasted the prescribed one hour before receiving communion?