

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

We are God's children. We are happy when we can love God and love each other. Sometimes we do things that can hurt our friendship with God and with one another, and even ourselves; this is called *sin*. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus forgives our sins and heals our hearts so that we can love God and love each other the way we were meant to. God wants our happiness and friendship more than anything else. This is why he gives us this beautiful sacrament.

PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

To get ready for Confession, we should ask ourselves if we have acted in ways that closed the door of our heart to God's love and to each other. This is called an *examination of conscience*. Here are some questions that may help you in your examination of conscience:

1. **God created me, and His love for me will never die.**
 - do I take time for my friendship with God in prayer?
 - do I ask God to help me during the day?
 - do I thank Him for what that I have?

2. **I am part of God's family. I belong to a parish community and to a school community.**
 - do I pray with my parish community at mass on Sunday?
 - do I pray for other people who are sick or need God's help?
 - do I treat others with kindness at school?

3. **In my own family. God commands us to *honour our parents***
 - do I listen to my parents and show them I love them?
 - do I help my brothers and sisters?
 - do I fight and argue at home?

4. **In my actions**
 - do I use God's name in a loving way, or do I ever use God's name when I'm angry?
 - do I respect other people's belongings, or do I ever take things from others when they don't belong to me?
 - do I tell the truth, or do I ever tell secrets or lies about someone behind their back?
 - do I say good things about other people, or do I say unkind things to others that might hurt them?
 - do I respect God's life in other people, or do I make fun of other people or do things to hurt them?
 - do I respect God's creation, or do I do things to hurt animals or pollute the environment?

God loves us. He wants us to be happy and to share His love with each other. He gives us the Sacraments of the Church to help us follow Jesus and grow in His love. Nothing will ever stop God from loving us. We never have to be afraid of telling God we are sorry in Confession. He always forgives His children.

MEETING THE PRIEST TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT

The priest will greet you and invite you to sit down to make your confession.

What to say:

Teachers, note that some Pastors ask that the child begin with “Bless me Father, for I have sinned.” The priest will respond with something like: “may the Lord be on your lips and in your heart, that you might worthily confess your sins,” blessing the child, who makes the sign of the cross. It’s a good idea to verify with the Pastor whether he will be asking that this part of the formula be used.

- Tell the priest how long it’s been since your last confession, (e.g. “It’s been 2 months since my last confession”)
- Then start by saying “These are my sins”
- The priest may ask you some questions or give you some helpful suggestions.
- You can make your Act of Contrition, telling God you’re sorry and will try to do better, with His help.
e.g. “O my God, I am sorry for my sins, because you are all good and deserve all my love. With the help of your grace I will sin no more.”

This is an abbreviated version of the traditional Act of Contrition which runs as follows:

O my God,
I am heartfully sorry for having offended Thee,
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 Thee, my God,
Who are all good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace,
to confess my sins, to do penance,
and to amend my life.

The Priest will:

- Forgive your sins and bless you (make the sign of the cross when he blesses you).
- Give you a special task or some prayers to pray as a penance to complete the Sacrament of Penance.

AFTER LEAVING THE PRIEST

- Carry out the penance the priest has given you.
- Say a prayer, thanking God the Father for Jesus’ forgiveness. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you follow God’s law of love.