

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

After you examine your conscience, enter into confessional and close the door behind you, and say:

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned, this is my first confession & these are my sins ...”

Now recall your sins (including about how many times you have committed these sins). When you have finished you can say:

“... For these and all my sins, I beg pardon from God and absolution from you, Father”

The priest will then assign you a penance that you will do once you leave the confessional, but he'll first ask you to make an Act of Contrition:

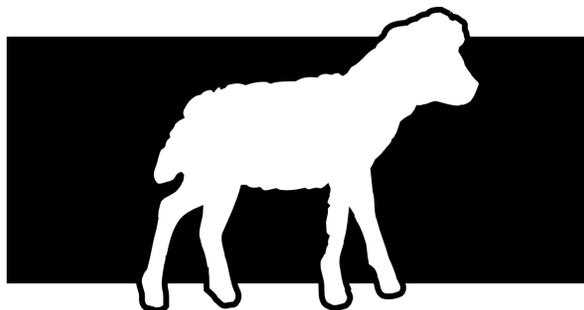
“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because I fear Your just punishments, but most of all because I have offended You, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen. “

Now the priest will give you absolution. Afterwards you leave the confessional (leaving the door open for the next penitent), and go into the church to do your penance and offer prayers of thanksgiving.

IMPORTANT PRAYERS TO KNOW

*Our Father, Who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

*Hail Mary, Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of death. Amen.*



By virtue of who he was, Our Lord never once sinned, but he did grow up to call sinners, and to call us to become saints. Thus each generation of Catholics for 2000 years has learned to ask for forgiveness from Jesus, who gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we confess our sins to a priest, as a representative of Jesus and of his Church, and then we know we are forgiven. Part of our growing up is our recognizing our sinfulness and our being able to take responsibility for our sins. Part of *our* growing in wisdom and grace is learning to go to confession. Because this is not something we do once, but something we do for the rest of our lives!.

AND JESUS GREW IN WISDOM
AND AGE, AND IN GRACE WITH GOD
AND WITH MAN. (LUKE 2:52)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The Bible tells us that anyone who says we are without sin is fooling ourselves and calling our Lord a liar. All of us have sinned, and it is a part of our growing in the spiritual life to be able to name those sins. Every night in our prayers we should reflect upon our day, and ask the Lord's forgiveness for our sins, but the Lord has also given us this Sacrament of Penance so that we might be obedient to him in confessing our sins and so that he might give us the grace not to be caught in our sins. The spiritual life is a life of recollection and reflection. Before we go to confession we need to pray and remember our sins so that when we get into the confessional we will be able to speak our sins out loud to the priest. Think! Examine your conscience. Are you always obedient to your parents? Do you always tell the truth? Are you always the best student? Are you always kind to others, to your friends or siblings? Do you pray every night? What sins is the Lord calling you to confess?



GOING TO CONFESSION

Confession is a rite or ritual in the Church, and so it has an expected pattern of actions and of words that we learn so that for the rest of our lives. Every Catholic should go to Confession numerous throughout the year, because the more we do it, the better we get at it, and the less trapped we become in our sin. We need the grace of Jesus to grow into the Catholics we're meant to be. Confession is a private place where we close the door behind us. We trust that the priest will never reveal our sins, and that here is a place where we can find not only forgiveness, but also understanding. Above all we remember that this is an act of trust in Jesus and also an act of worship, where we praise the Lord, because we know he loves us and that he wants to forgive us.



MAKING OUR PENANCE

After going to confession the priest will give us a penance. Sometimes it is to say a prayer or prayers like the "Our Father" or the "Hail Mary." He may ask us to pray for someone that we have hurt by our sins, or ask us to pray for our families or friends. The act of penance is usually done quietly in the pew after we leave the confessional. This Penance doesn't really pay Jesus back, for after all he has paid the price for our sins on the Cross. But this penance (whatever it may be) is healing in some small way to us, as it gives us some little way to show the Lord that we are grateful for his mercy. This is an important part of the rite. Even after we have made our penance, it is a good time to spend time in prayer, thanking Our Lord for his awesome love for us. And above all, it is essential for us to build a prayer life that will sustain us as adults for the rest of our lives.

