

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

(Source: *The Rite of Penance for Individual Penitents*, 41-47.
This is a **SAMPLE** based on the Rite. The actual experience may be embellished by the priest in accordance with the options of the Rite of Penance.)

Confession is only one part of the experience of the Sacrament of Penance. Within the text of the official rite, the Church refers to the sacramental experience as a celebration of reconciliation. The word, “confession” refers to the action of telling the priest or confessing sinful behaviors and attitudes. The word, “penance” refers to the action we take to restore our behavior and attitudes to the ways of God.

What am I reconciling?

The word, “reconcile” means to bring into harmony once again. The goal of the Church is order. We know that God’s kingdom is vibrant around us when we can see and experience harmony and order. We can disturb this harmony and order when our behaviors break relationships or introduce chaos into harmony. When we hurt others, we create an aura of chaos.

Approach the Sacrament of Penance with the hope of restoring order and harmony. This attitude helps you to accept God’s grace to reconcile chaotic behaviors and attitudes to God’s sense of harmony and order. Another word for this experience is restoration.

What are the behaviors and attitudes that create chaos – sin?

Have you ever shared a juicy story (gossip) about an acquaintance? Did you know that sharing negative stories

about others defaces that person of their God-given dignity? Due to gossip, that person may be viewed by a group of people as one not worth talking to or befriending. That creates chaos in the Kingdom of God on earth (sin). For other behaviors or attitudes to review, see St. Paul’s letters in the Bible: I Cor 6:9-10; Galatians 5: 19-21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5; I Timothy 1:19-20.

How do I receive the Sacrament of Penance?

Whether you seek individual Penance or communal Penance, the structure of the experience should be the same:

Greeting/Sign of the Cross

Scripture

Homily

Confession

Repentance

Prayer and absolution

Praise and Dismissal

In parish life, we use two of the three ways the Church gives us to celebrate the sacrament: Individual and Communal. This is an outline of a way to celebrate individual Penance.

INDIVIDUAL

To prepare, it is a good practice to review your day every evening asking, “How was I the presence of Christ today? Did I fall short of bringing the Kingdom of God (order and harmony) into my daily life?” There are two basic categories of behaviors that produce chaos (sin). There are venial sins (lie about work completed, sharing negative gossip, etc.) and mortal sins (murder, abortion, adultery, etc.)

The priest waits in the reconciliation room in church at appointed times. The small room allows us to meet him face to face or to stay behind a screen so the priest cannot see us. Think of the priest as a person who can guide you in your spiritual life. The Church professionally trains the priest to do this. After you walk into the room, the priest might greet you.

GREETING/SIGN OF THE CROSS

Priest: Hello. Peace be with you.

Penitent: And also with you.

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Penitent (Make the sign of the cross). Amen.

Priest: May God, who has enlightened every heart,
Help you to know your sins
And trust in his mercy.

Penitent: Amen.

SCRIPTURE

(The priest may read scripture to you or invite you to read it. OR you may bring a selection of scripture you have meditated upon, read it, and share its relevance to you with the priest.)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE AND REPENTANCE

Priest: I invite you to pray:

Penitent: I confess to almighty God, to you my brother, that I have sinned, through my fault, and in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, in what I

have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you my brother, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

CONFESSION

Penitent: (Tell the priest the thoughts, words, actions, or lack of action that you are responsible for, that caused chaos – sin – in your life. **The goal is** to admit sin, take responsibility for it, give the sin away to God through the priest, and receive restoration/resolution/peace through sacramental grace.)

Father, I . . .

For this (these), I am sorry.

Priest: (The priest usually offers counsel and spiritual direction reminding you that you died to sin in baptism and you can rise to new life as Jesus rose to new life after he suffered and died. He will offer you a penance to do to help you restore your life.)

For your penance, . . .

Penitent: Thank you, Father.

PRAYER OF THE PENITENT AND ABSOLUTION

Priest: I invite you now to express your sorrow.

Penitent: My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and fail 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 Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

OR

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Priest: God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Penitent: (make the sign of the cross when the priest blesses you.)

Priest: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

Penitent: **His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 107:1)**

Priest: The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.

Penitent: **Thanks be to God. (Then you leave and do the penance the priest has given you.)**