



Welcome to St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Roman Catholic Rite.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

(Confession—Individual Guide)

Many have avoided celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation because of the difficulty it takes to prepare or practice. Please don't be intimidated. Take a moment to reflect with the help of this guide to open yourself to healing, forgiveness, and peace.

Preparation

The celebration of this sacrament begins with a time of private preparation. This preparation is called the examination of conscience. The penitent, or person seeking forgiveness, reflects on their life with the Ten Commandments, the beatitudes, the example of Christ and then prays to God for forgiveness. This examination should focus on your relationships with God and others. Usually, we know our sins all too well; the examination of conscience will help us to look at them in the light of the Gospel, and be better able to express them in confession.

Welcome of the Priest

You may have the option to celebrate this sacrament face to face or anonymously, kneeling behind a screen. The priest welcomes you and then both you and he make the sign of the cross:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.

Indicate you state in life (married, single, divorced), how long it has been since your last confession, and anything else to help your confessor.

Confession of Sins

Next the priest invites you to confess your sins. The priest may ask questions to help you in making a full confession. The confession of sins should be as complete as possible, as memory allows. That does not mean it needs to take a long time or that you have to disclose each detail. The important things is that the penitent “looks squarely at the sins committed, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens again to God and the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible.” (Catechism, 1455) Trust in God’s healing love, allowing this process to open you to the fullness of life in Christ.

Advice of the Priest

Sacramental Reconciliation is intended to aid you in experiencing the forgiveness of God and help you walk in life and light. The priest will not solve your problems, but rather will offer advice to help you in starting a new way of life. He may also give you a simple penance, which may take the form of prayer, self-denial, service to others, or works of mercy.

Prayer of the Penitent

Next the priest invites you to pray an act of contrition. There are many different options for this prayer. You can learn one of the following, bring this sheet with you, or share your own prayer.

A. My God,

***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 savior Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.***

Confession of Sins

OR

B. O my God,

***I am heartily 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. Amen.***

Prayer of Absolution

Now the priest extends his hands over your head and prays the prayer of absolution, making the sign of the cross over you during the final words: “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.” You respond:

Amen!

Dismissal

Now the priest dismisses you. You respond:

Thanks be to God!

Give thanks to God for forgiving you. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next confession. Do your Penance, and resolve to return to the Sacrament often—as Catholics we are blessed to celebrate God’s forgiveness in this way, the ordinary way to have our sins forgiven. Celebrate this Sacrament often to challenge weakness, grow in holiness and lead a balanced and virtuous life.

“Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life!”

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

According to the 10 Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Do I give God time every day in prayer?
- Do I seek to love God with my whole heart?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices?
- Do I seek to surrender myself to God's word taught by the Church?
- Have I ever received communion in the state of serious sin amidst broken relationships?
- Have I ever deliberately told a lie in Confession or have I withheld a serious sin from the priest in Confession?
- Are there other "gods" in my life?
Money, Security, Power, People, etc.?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- Have I used God's name in vain: lightly or carelessly?
- Have I been angry with God?
- Have I wished evil upon any other person?
- Have I insulted another person or object, knowing that they too are sacred?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
- Do I do needless work on Sunday?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- Do I honor and obey my parents?
- Have I neglected my duties to my family?
- Have I given my family a loving example?
- Do I try to bring peace into my home life?
- Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives?

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I had an abortion or encouraged or helped anyone to have an abortion?
- Have I physically harmed anyone, including myself?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs?
- Did I lead another into sin?
- Have I been angry or resentful?
- Have I harbored hatred in my heart?
- Have I engaged, in any way, in sins against human life?
- Have I participated in or approved of euthanasia?
- Have I been an advocate for peace?
- Have I spoken up against war and violence?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action?
- Have I been faithful to my deepest relationships?
- Have I engaged in any sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Have I been guilty of masturbation, pornography?
- Do I seek to control my thoughts and imaginations?
- Have I respected all others, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words, actions?
- Am I careful to dress modestly?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen what is not mine?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, and home?
- Do I gamble excessively?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Do I seek solidarity with those in need?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?
- Do I give thanks to God for what I have?
- Have I cheated anyone out of what is justly theirs?
- Have I been a good steward of my gifts?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Have I lied? Have I gossiped?
- Do I speak badly of others behind their back?
- Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
- Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?
- Have I injured the reputation of others by slanders?
- Am I passive aggressive in my relationships?

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, television, conversation or curiosity?
- Do I ask God for help to avoid these temptations?
- Have I behaved in an inappropriate way with others: flirting, being superficial, etc.?
- Have I regarded others as sacred, made in the image and likeness of God?

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- Am I jealous of what other people have?
- Do I envy the families or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life?

