

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

God forgives us our sins when priests and bishops give absolution during the sacrament we call 'Reconciliation', 'Forgiveness' or Confession. The following is a simple explanation, during which we'll use CONFESSION.

Confession is a magnificent gift from God, instituted by his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:19.23), who, being one with God, had every right to do so. It shows that our ever-merciful God wanted every man and woman to know their sins had been forgiven.

We can pray earnestly and ask God to forgive our sins, go to mass, and take part eagerly and earnestly, during which we ask for our sins to be forgiven. Our ever-merciful God will probably have done so, but we can never be sure.

ONLY BY GOING TO CONFESSION SINCERELY CAN WE BE SURE.

This sacrament is truly a unique, magnificent gift. When we sincerely take part and are given ABSOLUTION, we know God has forgiven our sins.

We know that our existence here on earth is to prove to God that he should accept our souls to live with him for eternity when we die. How many of us think about this with our busy lives and social media doing everything possible to make us forget?

Our so-called busy lives are finite and so small compared with eternity that we should never forget what awaits our souls when we die, which could be in the next minute or so or not for many years.

Although Confession is a true and remarkable gift from God, many Catholics either ignore it or can't be bothered to go. Yet it takes up so little time, is easy to go to, and is so beneficial for our souls.

When people haven't been to confession for some time, it's usually because it's been so long since they attended that they've forgotten what to say and do, or they're embarrassed to tell their priest things they are ashamed of doing.

If it's been a long time since you went to this sacrament, the priest will know it's difficult for you and will be keen to help you.

If you're ashamed of what you've done and are afraid of what the priest may think of you, go to one who doesn't know you, but go.

Priests and bishops know that cleansing your soul of sins is a great gift from God: "The Joy in heaven over one repentant sinner".

The following shows how simple and easy it is to go to Confession. It's in two parts:

1. EXAMINING OUR CONSCIENCE
2. ACTUALLY GOING TO CONFESSION:

We 'Examine our Conscience' by praying sincerely and asking God to help us make a good confession. We then determine what mortal and venial sins we've committed and how many times for each since our last confession. If it's been some time, it helps if you can determine how many times a day you commit each sin, and then multiply these by the number of days since your last confession. 'Examining our Conscience' shows we are sincere in our commitment.

SOME SINS TO CONSIDER

This list of possibilities may help us remember the sins we've committed before we go to confession.

IT'S NOT A COMPLETE LIST, but ask yourself, "Have I.....?"

- Taken the Lord's name in vain?
- Kept holy the sabbath day?
- Been to mass on Sundays and Holy Days?
- Paid attention at mass?
- Made sure my children receive religious instruction?
- Broken any solemn promises or vows?
- Abused my body in any way?
- Shown due respect to my parents?
- Been angry with others?
 - Revengeful, Envious,
 - Impatient, Lazy,
 - Proud, Greedy
- Had impure thoughts?
- Willingly looked at impure pictures?
- Been racial in any way?
- Stolen any things?
- Spoken about anyone behind their back?
- Wished ill on anyone for any reason.
 - Plus any others you can think of.

When it's time to go to confession, you can either use the confessional, where the priest normally cannot see you but can hear you, **if there is one**, or sit openly in front of the priest. It's up to you.

ACTUALLY GOING TO CONFESSION

Go into the confessional, or sit in front of the priest, and then when you are ready to begin your confession:

- ❖ Bless yourself and then say how long it is since your last confession:

Father forgive me for I have sinned, It's been (n) [days, weeks, months, years] since my last confession."

- ❖ If it's been a long time, the priest will know that it must have been difficult for you to come to this sacrament, so he'll be very happy to help you. (The joy in heaven over one repentant sinner).
- ❖ Tell the priest all the sins you've committed - both mortal and venial; and how many times. When you can remember no more, say to the priest something like:

"Father, for these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember I humbly beg your pardon, penance and absolution."

- ❖ Listen earnestly to any advice the priest gives; he'll want to help you. He'll now give you PENANCE to do after you leave; this is usually some prayers.
- ❖ After giving you penance to do, he'll ask you to make an Act of Contrition', and if necessary, help you with it. An example is:

"O my God because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again"

- ❖ THE PRIEST NOW **ABSOLVES YOU FROM YOUR SINS.**
- ❖ Bless yourself and thank the priest. You can now leave.

GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU YOUR SINS
AND YOUR SOUL IS NOW IN FAVOUR WITH GOD.

Go back into the church and thank God for allowing you to have had your sins forgiven.

**DON'T FORGET TO DO
THE PENANCE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN.**