

A Walk through the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Before you go to receive the Sacrament.

The Lord is Kind and Merciful! Put yourself in God's presence by doing a thorough examination of conscience [see insert]. Also, be truly sorry for your sins. Ask God to help you see your own sin as God sees it, and for the grace to feel true sorrow. **True contrition, repentance, and acceptance of God's unconditional forgiveness are the most important parts of the sacrament.** Also, resolve to avoid committing these sins in the future and avoid things that lead you into sin.

During confession:

When you enter the reconciliation room or confessional, the priest will greet you. You can either choose to stay behind the screen, or receive the sacrament face to face with the priest, whichever you are more comfortable with.

- The priest will greet you and may say a small prayer to help you make a good confession.
- Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession. You can use the traditional prayer, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [length of time] since my last confession."
- Tell the priest the sins you remember. It is often best to begin with your most serious sins and the ones which are most difficult to talk about. It is often easier to talk about the rest after that.

Confess all serious sin [called mortal sin]. Mortal sin is of grave matter and is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent. "Grave matter" usually are those things that violate the Ten Commandments and commands of Christ and the Church. Mistakes are not sin. Remember, this is a time for you to meet Christ through the priest. It may feel difficult to talk about your sin, but remember that the priest has been given a special mission to act in the person of Christ. You are opening your heart to Jesus Christ, not simply

to the priest who sits before you. Be as specific as possible, giving some indication of how frequently you've committed the sins. An analogy to the medical world applies here. In order for the doctor to heal you, you must tell him or her of the sickness. Likewise, we bring our hurts and sin before Christ in Confession to be healed. Christ forgives you through the ministry of the Church. Priests are bound to keep absolute secrecy regarding the sins that penitents have confessed to them.

It is also a good idea to confess some of your less serious sins as well. Confessing less serious sin [venial sin] can be more general [for example, "lately I've really been struggling with being arrogant"]. It is often helpful to bring even less serious sin before the Lord in Confession in order to bring all of your wounds before Christ and seek His healing comfort. It also helps the priest to better understand your spiritual life and give you advice to help you grow in your love of Christ.

If at any point you do not know how to proceed, or if you are having difficulty confessing your sins, just ask the priest for help. Remember, just try your best and be honest about your sin. As long as you are seeking to truly bring the sin you can remember to Confession, God will forgive your sins, even if you forget to mention some of them.

- When you are finished telling the priest your sins, he will give you some advice to help you grow in your relationship with God. Listen to his advice and encouragement.
- The priest will then give you a penance—a prayer or action that we do to deepen our conversion. You should be willing and able to do the penance. If you have concerns that you will not be able to do the penance, simply tell the priest. Doing penance helps to heal the damage done by our sin, and helps to transform us. It is not a mere punishment.

- Say an Act of Contrition. You can use these or similar words:

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. (Rite of Penance, 46).

- The priest will then extend his hands over you and grant you absolution. Listen to the words of absolution, which are:
"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 sin; 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" [Rite of Penance, 46].
- You respond, "AMEN."
- The priest may then offer a prayer of thanksgiving, such as "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good." You respond, "His mercy endures forever." The rite ends with the priest giving a dismissal and blessing, such as "The Lord has freed you from your sins, go in peace."
- After receiving absolution, go and do the penance given by the priest, in order to make reparation for the sin committed and to strengthen you in your Christian journey.

Now you are freed from your sin, and have received God's grace to help you live your Christian life! You are reconciled with God and the Church, and should receive spiritual consolation and serenity.



Why Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

God's love and mercy is beyond what we can imagine! The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great gift through which we receive the unconditional mercy of God, are reconciled with the entire Body of Christ, and receive God's grace to help change our hearts and lives. No matter how long it's been, or whether or not you ever received it, all are welcome to this banquet of mercy.

We ask God for forgiveness for the sins of our life at every Mass and every day. But when we sin, we not only harm ourselves and our relationship with God, but we also affect our relationship with our brothers and sisters. We can't ask every single person in the Church for forgiveness, but through Reconciliation, we restore our relationship with the Church. When we go to the Sacrament, we receive the unconditional guarantee that our sins are forgiven, and receive the great peace and freedom that comes with that. God also restores our relationship with the entire Body of Christ, the Church.

The Church instructs us to go to Reconciliation (also called "Confession" or "Penance") once per year and whenever we commit serious sin. The Church knows how much we long for God's mercy and need it. We are encouraged to receive this Sacrament often, in order to receive its rich blessings and the comfort of this intense experience of God's mercy. Often, the Sacrament of Reconciliation leaves us with a sense of great relief and joy.

"So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

812 N. Jackson
414/276-9814

Wednesday through Friday
4:30 to 5:00 PM
Reconciliation Room
(off of the Daily Chapel)

or by appointment with Fr. Carl Last, Rector & Pastor

Three Holy Women Parish

2011 N. Oakland Ave. (Holy Rosary Site)
414/271-6577

Saturday
3:30-4:15 PM

or by appointment with Fr. Tim Kitzke, Pastor or Fr. Brian Mason, Associate Pastor

Old Saint Mary Parish

836 N. Broadway
414/271-6180

Monday, Tuesday & Friday
11:30 AM

or by appointment with Fr. Tim Kitzke, Pastor or Fr. Brian Mason, Associate Pastor

A Simple Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation



"While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son. But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. Then the celebration began."

Luke 15: 20-25,
Jesus tells the Parable of the Prodigal Son