

**How to Make an Examination of Conscience:** Before going to Confession, take some time to reflect on your life and identify your sins. You can use the Ten Commandments as a guide:

**Have I put anything before God** in my life, such as money, work, or entertainment?

**Have I used God's name in vain** or spoken disrespectfully about sacred things?

**Have I kept Sundays and holy days of obligation holy** by attending Mass and resting from unnecessary work?

**Have I disobeyed or disrespected my parents, teachers, or lawful authorities?**

**Have I harmed someone, held hatred, or wished evil on others?**

**Have I respected the sanctity of marriage and human life,** including avoiding impure thoughts or actions?

**Have I stolen anything** or been dishonest in any way?

**Have I lied** or spoken falsely about others?

**Have I been envious of others' possessions or achievements?**

**Have I avoided sinful occasions or helped others to sin?**

Take time to reflect honestly on your thoughts, words, and actions. You can write down your sins if it helps you remember during Confession.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why confess to a priest?**

Jesus gave His apostles (and their successors) the authority to forgive sins. When we confess to a priest, we are confessing to Christ Himself, who acts through the priest.

### **Can any sin be forgiven?**

Yes! No sin is too great for God's mercy. As long as you are truly sorry, God will forgive any sin you confess with a contrite heart.

### **How often should I go to Confession?**

The Church recommends regular Confession, at least once a year, but many Catholics go monthly or even weekly to grow in holiness.

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## Conclusion

The Sacrament of Confession is a gift from God to help us grow in holiness, heal our souls, and strengthen our relationship with Him. Don't be afraid to seek God's mercy. He is always ready to welcome you back with open arms.

**"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."** (1 John 1:9)

*May the peace of Christ be with you as you seek His forgiveness and grace!*

## The Sacrament of Confession: A Path to Healing and Forgiveness

Welcome to the Sacrament of Confession, also known as Reconciliation or Penance. This beautiful sacrament is a gift from God, given to help us reconcile with Him and receive His boundless mercy. This pamphlet will guide you through the process, the biblical foundation, and why Confession is essential for spiritual growth.

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### What is the Sacrament of Confession?

The Sacrament of Confession is the way Catholics seek forgiveness for their sins. It allows us to confess our sins to a priest, who, acting in the person of Christ, grants absolution and reconciliation with God. This sacrament restores us to a state of grace, healing our relationship with God and the Church.

### Why Confess?

**Healing of the soul:** Sin wounds our relationship with God, and Confession helps us heal those wounds.

**Reconciliation:** It restores our friendship with God and our place in the Church community.

**Grace:** We receive grace to avoid sin in the future.

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## Did Jesus Establish this Sacrament?

Yes, Jesus Himself gave His apostles the authority to forgive sins:

**"And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'"** (John 20:22-23)

In this moment, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Confession by giving the apostles the power to forgive sins through the Holy Spirit. This authority has been passed down through the Church to bishops and priests, who continue to act as instruments of God's mercy.

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## Biblical Evidence for Confession

**James 5:16:** "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

**Matthew 16:19:** Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, saying, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20:** Paul speaks of the ministry of reconciliation given to the apostles: "God... has given us the ministry of reconciliation... We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

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## How Ancient is the Sacrament?

The Sacrament of Confession, or Reconciliation, has deep roots in the early Christian Church, tracing back nearly 2,000 years. From the very beginning, the Church has recognized the need for personal repentance and forgiveness of sins.

**Early Christian Practices (1st - 5th Century):** In the earliest days of the Church, Christians practiced public confession. Those guilty of serious sins, such as murder or apostasy (denying the faith), would confess their sins before the entire community. After doing public penance, they were formally reconciled by the bishop. This practice, while difficult, highlighted the seriousness of sin and the communal nature of repentance. **Tertullian (2nd Century)** wrote about public confession and penance as an established practice in the early Church: "*The church has the power of forgiving sins. This I acknowledge and adjudge*" (On Repentance, Chapter 10).

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**How to Go to Confession:** If you're new to Confession or it's been a while, don't worry! The priest will guide you through the process. Here is a step-by-step guide:

1. **Examine your conscience** (see below).
2. **Enter the confessional:** You may choose to sit face-to-face with the priest or kneel behind a screen.
3. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

4. **Say how long it's been** since your last confession.
5. **Confess your sins:** Be honest and specific about the sins you have committed.
6. **Listen to the priest's guidance:** He may give you advice or encouragement.
7. **Receive your penance:** This is an action or prayer to help repair the damage caused by sin and express your sorrow.
8. **Pray an Act of Contrition** (a prayer expressing sorrow for your sins, see example below).
9. **Receive absolution:** The priest will pray the words of absolution, and your sins will be forgiven.
10. **Leave the confessional and complete your penance** as soon as possible.

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## An Example of the Act of Contrition

*"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend 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 occasions of sin. Amen."*