

How to Prepare for Confession

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO RECEIVING
GOD'S MERCY WELL

*You do not need a perfect speech. You need honesty,
contrition and a willingness to receive grace.*



What Confession Is

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is not a performance review. It is a sacrament of healing in which we confess our sins, receive absolution through the ministry of the priest and are reconciled with God and the Church.

A good confession is clear and honest. You do not need to explain every circumstance unless it changes the nature of the sin or the priest asks a question.

Before You Go

1. Ask the Holy Spirit for light and honesty.
2. Examine your conscience using the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, or another sound Catholic guide.
3. For mortal sins, be ready to confess the kind of sin and, as best you can, the number of times.
4. Make a sincere act of contrition—sorrow for a sin and a real intention to turn from it.
5. If it has been a long time since your last confession, tell the priest. He can guide you through the steps.

A Simple Way to Begin

Make the Sign of the Cross. Then you can say something like:

“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ since my last confession.”

Confess your sins simply. When you are finished, you can say: ***“For these and all my sins, I am sorry.”***

The priest may offer counsel and will assign a penance. He will invite you to make an Act of Contrition, then give absolution.

If You Freeze

- Say, “Father, it has been a while and I may need help.”
- Bring a short written list if that helps you remember; destroy it afterward.
- Do not avoid confession because you are embarrassed. God already knows the sin, and Reconciliation serves to remove it.
- If you genuinely forget a sin, do not panic. Mention it in a later confession if you remember it.

An Act of Contrition

If your parish provides a prayer, you may use it. You can also make a sincere act of contrition in your own words.

One brief approved form is:

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

After Confession

- Complete your penance as soon as reasonably possible.
- Thank God for the grace of the sacrament.
- If you need to repair harm you caused, take the next honest step.
- Do not keep revisiting sins that have been absolved because you do not “feel forgiven.” Trust the sacrament.
- Begin again. That is part of the Christian life.

“If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.”

1 JOHN 1:9