

## What is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation (also known as Confession or Penance) is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in his love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time, sinners reconcile with the Church and others, because they are also wounded by our sins.

Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people, and God. In Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and his Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and his Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future.

### The forgiveness of sins involves four parts:

- **Contrition:** a sincere sorrow for having offended God is the most important act of the penitent. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.
- **Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way to God by confessing them to a priest.
- **Penance:** an important part of our healing is the penance the priest imposes in reparation for our sins.
- **Absolution:** the priest speaks the words by which 'God, the Father of Mercies' reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the Cross.

## Archdiocese of St. Louis



To receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, contact your local parish priest.

To find a Catholic church near you:  
[archstl.org/app/directory/parishes](http://archstl.org/app/directory/parishes)



The Light is ON  for You  
*Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation*

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## RECONCILIATION

A SHORT GUIDE



*The Sacrament of Reconciliation  
is the story of God's love that  
never turns away from us.*



Archdiocese of St. Louis

Office of Laity & Family Life  
Office of Sacred Worship

## Preparing for Confession

Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation. We should begin with prayer, placing ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. We seek forgiveness and healing through repentance and a resolve to avoid sin in the future.

We then thoroughly review our lives since our last confession, searching our thoughts, words, and actions for times we did not conform to God's command to love him and one another through his laws and the laws of his Church. This is called an examination of conscience.

### To make an examination of conscience:

- Begin with a prayer asking for God's help.
- Review your life with the help of the questions found on the next panel.
- Tell God how truly sorry you are for your sins.
- Make a firm resolution not to sin again.



*If necessary, take this brochure and your list of sins with you to confession.*

## Examination of Conscience

Recall your sins by prayerfully reviewing what you have done, with full knowledge and full consent, against God's Commandments and the teachings of the Church.

- Have I prayed to God every day, and thanked Him for His many gifts? Have I taken the name of God in vain?
- Have I gone to confession at least once a year? Have I received communion in a state of mortal sin?
- Have I indulged in boasting or vainglory?
- Have I put my faith in danger in any way or engaged in superstitious practices?
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Have I fasted and abstained on the prescribed days?
- Have I disobeyed my parents or lawful superiors in important matters?
- Have I hated others, or desired revenge? Have I been disrespectful or refused forgiveness? Have I been envious?
- Have I been drunk or taken illicit drugs?
- Have I consented to, recommended, or actively taken part in an abortion?
- Have I willfully looked at pornography, entertained impure thoughts, or engaged in unchaste conversations or actions?
- Have I used artificial contraception?
- Have I been unfaithful to my spouse or engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Have I stolen or damaged another's property? Have I been honest in my business relations and with my employer?
- Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor? Do I contribute to the Church?
- Have I told lies or gossiped? Have I judged others rashly in serious matters?

## Rite of Reconciliation

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is the most comfortable for you.

### A step-by-step guide to Reconciliation:

1. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, *'Bless me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was [give the number of weeks, months, or years].'*
2. Confess all of your sins to the priest. In order to make a good confession, you must confess all mortal sins according to kind and number. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, ask the priest to help you.
3. Following your confession of sins, say: *'I am sorry for these and all my sins.'*
4. The priest assigns you a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.
5. Say an Act of Contrition: *'God I am heartily sorry for having offended you, 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 you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.'*
6. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.
7. Perform your assigned penance.
8. Resolve to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation often.