

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Outline of the Basic Steps

- 1) Preparation.
 - a) Place yourself in God's loving presence. Remember this sacrament is a sign and celebration of the great love and mercy of Jesus, who forgives totally all who approach Him with contrite and humble hearts.
 - b) Assured of God's goodness rather than burdened by fear, review your life with the help of this guide. Resolve to renew your heart.
- 2) Introduction.
 - c) After entering the confessional or confession room (and being welcomed), make the sign of the cross with the priest, the representative of the loving and forgiving Christ.
 - d) After some words of greeting, the priest may say an introductory prayer to which you answer, "Amen."
- 4) Reading of Scripture. (Optional)
 - a) A short biblical passage expressing God's mercy and call to conversion is selected and read by the priest. (This could also be done by the penitent.)
- 5) Confession of Sin & Penance.
 - a) If necessary, the priest will help you make a complete confession, giving counsel and encouragement and suggesting a penance.
- 6) Manifestation of Contrition.
 - a) The Act of Contrition is a distinct part of the Sacrament. Express sorrow in your own words or use a traditional form.
- 7) Absolution.
 - a) Representing Christ and the Church, the priest says the words which convey God's forgiveness.
- 8) Dismissal.
 - a) The priest says one of several possible prayers followed by appropriate words of dismissal.

My Relationship to God

"You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart."

1. Is my whole life directed toward loving God and seeking His kingdom and plan for humanity? Or are personal greed and the things of this world my basic object of devotion?
2. Do I accept with my whole heart the revelation of God's love through Jesus and do I respond fully to the call of this Spirit in my life?
3. Do I pray sufficiently each day and seek to have a continuous spirit of prayer? Do I turn to God in good times and bad and in times of temptation? Do I listen with an open and humble heart and am I ready to accept the inner conversion to which He invites me? Do I praise and thank Him for His gifts?
4. Do I worship God as an active member of the faith community that Christ founded, the Church? Am I conscious of and responsive to the Body of Christ, local and universal? Do I participate fully in the Mass each Sunday and in the whole sacramental life of the Church? Do I accept Church teaching and authority in a spirit of faith and cooperation?
5. Do I take steps to deepen and increase my understanding of the faith? Do I profess and live it courageously?
6. Have I shown reverence for God in my speech and in my attitude toward religious symbols? Have I elevated things like money, status, superstition or occult practices to the level of false gods?

My Relationship to Others

"Love one another as I have loved you."

1. Do I truly love my neighbors-as myself? Do I aid or obstruct their progress toward God and a Fuller life? Have I used or exploited others for my own selfish interests?
2. Am I caring toward my family? Do I show fidelity, patience, reverence and love to my spouse, children, parents, brothers, sisters? Have I shown good example? Fulfilled my respective role?
3. Do I deal honestly and truthfully with others? Have I harmed anyone by deceit, rash judgment, detraction, calumny or broken

- agreements? Have I worked honestly, upheld contracts, paid fair wages?
4. Have my relations to others been faithful and chaste? Have I sexually exploited or demeaned another? Am I guilty of such violations of chastity as adultery, fornication, or conversation that is indecent or cheapens human dignity?
 5. Have I hated others, shown prejudice or discrimination toward them? Have I stolen or damaged the property of others? Have I returned or paid for stolen or damaged goods? Do I share what God has given me with those in need?
 6. Have I injured the life, limb or reputation of others? Have I upheld and protected the right of life at all levels? Have I procured or cooperated in abortion or not revered the human dignity of the aged, the retarded, deformed or mentally ill? Am I violent? Do I strive to reduce violence around me?
 7. Do I bring the good news of the gospel to others? Do I promote Christian values and the life of the Church on all levels of human society? Do I work and pray for Christian unity? Do I try to heal the wounds of the Church or do I inflame them? Do I support and involve myself in the Catholic Community or Parish to which I belong?
 8. Do I obey legitimate authority? Do I exercise leadership and authority in a spirit of Christian service?
 9. Do I work for the betterment of human society? Do I try to be informed and actively concerned about social and political issues that affect the common good whether on the local, national or global level?
 10. According to my role in life, do I seek to eliminate from the world whatever keeps my brothers and sisters from the full human development intended by their creator: poverty, disease, hunger, injustice, discrimination, oppressive laws and structures, unequal distribution of world resources? Am I wasteful? Do I support according to my means and abilities, organizations which work for social improvement?

My Personal Growth in Christ

"Be perfect as your Father is perfect."

1. Is Christ and His way of living the basic goal of my life? What inclinations and attitudes within me are hindrances to my growth and development as God's son or daughter? Am I too self-

- centered? Do I work on controlling dangerous attitudes like pride, arrogance, jealousy, avarice, lust, intemperance, self-sufficiency, prejudice? Do I explore my motives and overall patten of conduct? Do I make full use of my talents and gifts?
2. Do I try to keep a cheerful, positive disposition? Do I give in to depression and self-pity? Do I put myself down? Do I let unfounded fears limit my potential and personal freedom? Have I let fear prevent me from following my conscience? Do I seek counseling, spiritual direction and other aids to personal growth, when needed? Do I take care of my health? Overeat, over-drink, take harmful drugs?
 3. Do I have a wholesome attitude toward my own sexuality? Have I willfully indulged in thoughts, actions, reading, entertainment that are contrary to the dignity and proper meaning of sex?
 4. Do I take time for my spiritual growth? Do I have a wholesome spirit of penance and self-denial as taught by Jesus? Do I observe the day so f penance established by the Church? Is personal renewal and on-going inner conversion a priority in my life? Am I open to change and the call to fuller life prompted by God's Spirit in my heart?

Act of Contrition.

1. 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.

OR

2. Oh my God, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins, for not loving others and for not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again.

OR

3. Any spontaneous prayer that tells God you are sorry, that you will mend your ways and avoid what leads to sin is a good Act of Contrition.