**Aid for Confession**

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**A Review of the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Just as the wounds of sin are varied and multiple in the life of individuals and of the community, so too the healing that penance provides is varied. Those who by grave sin have withdrawn from communion with God in love are called back in the sacrament of penance to the life they have lost. And those who, experiencing their weakness daily, fall into venial sins draw strength from a repeated celebration of penance to reach the full freedom of the children of God.

- To obtain the saving remedy of the sacrament of the sacrament of penance:

- One must confess to a priest each and every grave sin that they remember after an examination of conscience. Christians have a duty to make a good confession of sin before a priest at least once a year.

- The frequent and careful celebration of the sacrament is also very useful as a remedy for venial sins

*From the Rite of Penance,* 2010

**Guide for Celebrating the Sacrament**

Spend time in prayer before the Lord at home or before the Most Blessed Sacrament asking the Lord to grant the gift of awareness of your sin and the strength to amend your life, compare your life with the example and commandments of Christ, and then pray to the Lord for the forgiveness of sins.

**Entering the confessional**
Kneel behind the screen or sit before the priest.
Make the sign of the cross, saying: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The traditional formula: “Bless me Father for I have sinned, I am ‘indicate your state in life (married, single, engaged, etc)’, it has been ‘x’ (weeks, months, years, etc.) since my last confession” is helpful to assist you and the priest in the evaluation of your sin.

**The Confession of Sin**
Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession. Confess your sins.

* Try to be as clear as possible, identifying the sins clearly without excuses and blame.
* Try to be clear about identifying the number of times you have committed each sin.

**Counsel by the Priest**
If necessary, the priest may assist you in making a complete confession, encouraging you to sincerely repent of your sins. He may also offer practical advice for beginning a new life.

**Penance**
True conversion is completed by a removal of sins committed, a change of life and a correction or healing of injuries done. The priest may offer some kind of prayer or action to help restore order and right relationships so that a penitent can leave behind what has followed them. **A penitent must complete the penance offered by the priest.**

**Penitent Prayer**
Following the offering of penance by the priest, a prayer of contrition is offer:
One of the following examples may be used:

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to** [**sin**](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=10849) **no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.**

or

**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*

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

**Absolution**
The priest then offers the prayer of absolution. For in God’s design the humanity and loving kindness of our
Savior have visibly appeared to us and so God uses visible signs to give salvation and to renew the broken covenant.

**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 sins; 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. Amen.**

Make the sign of the cross as the priest says: “in the name of the Father...

**Dismissal**

Following absolution by the priest you are invited to return to the Church to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s mercy in your life and, if necessary, to perform the penance given by the priest.

He may use these or similar words:

 **Priest:** Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

 **Penitent: His mercy endures for ever.**

 **or**

 **Priest:** The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.

**Invitation to prayer and individual examination of conscience**

*Following confession you are welcome to remain in the Church and offer your thanksgiving and complete your penance or depart to complete your penance at another time.*

**Examination of Conscience**

An examination of conscience should be made prior to entering the confessional. Each person ought to examine his life in the light of God’s word.

* What is my attitude to the sacrament of penance? Do I want to be free from sin or do I look at the sacrament as a burden and something to be avoided?
* Did I forget to mention, or deliberately conceal, any grave sins in past confessions?
* Did I perform the penance I was given? Did I make reparation for any injury to others?

**The Lord says: “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart.”**

* Is my heart set on God, so that I really love him above all things and am faithful to his commandments, as a son loves his father? Or am I concerned about the things of this world? Have I a right intention in what I do?
* Is my faith in God firm and secure? Am I wholehearted in accepting the Church’s teaching? Have I been careful to grow in my understanding of the faith, to hear God’s word, to listen to instructions on the faith, to avoid dangers to faith? Have I been always strong and fearless in professing my faith in God and the Church? Have I been willing to be known as a Christian in private and public life?
* Have I prayed morning and evening? When I pray, do I really raise my mind and heart to God or is it a matter of words only? Do I offer God my difficulties, my joys, and my sorrows? Do I turn to God in time of temptation?
* Have I love and reverence for God’s name? Have I offended him in blasphemy, swearing falsely, or taking his name in vain? Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?
* Do I keep Sundays and feast days holy by taking a full part, with attention and devotion, in the liturgy, and especially in the Mass? Have I fulfilled the precepts of annual confession and of communion during the Easter season?
* Are there false gods that I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper turst than I give to God: money, superstition, spiritism, or other occult practices?

**The Lord says: “Love one another as I have loved you.”**

* Have I a genuine love for my neighbors? Or do I use them for my own ends, or do to them what I would not want done to myself? Have I given grave scandal by my words or actions?
* In my family life, have I contributed to the well-being and happiness of the rest of the family by patience and genuine love? Have I been obedient to parents, showing them proper respect and giving them help in their spiritual and material needs? Have I been careful to give a Christian upbringing to my children, and to help them by good example and by exercising authority as a parent? Have I been faithful to my husband/wife in my heart and in my relations with others?
* Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate? Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune, and poverty? Or do I look down on my neighbor, especially the poor, the sick, the elderly, strangers, and people of other races?
* Does my life reflect the mission I received in confirmation? Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church and of the world and prayed for them: for unity in the Church, for the spread of the Gospel, for peace and justice?
* Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community in which I live, or do I spend my life caring only for myself? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality, harmony, and love in human relations? Have I done my duty as a citizen? Have I paid my taxes?
* In my work or profession am I just, hard-working, honest, serving society out of love for others? Have I paid a fair wage to my employees? Have I been faithful to my promises and contracts?
* Have I obeyed legitimate authority and given it due respect?
* If I am in a position of responsibility or authority, do I use this for my own advantage or for the good of others, in a spirit of service?
* Have I been truthful and fair, or have I injured others by deceit, calumny, detraction, rash judgment, or violation or a secret?
* Have I done violence to others by damage to life or limb, reputation, honor, or material possessions? Have I involved them in loss? Have I been responsible for advising an abortion or procuring one? Have I kept up hatred for others? Am I estranged from others through quarrels, enmity, insults, anger? Have I been guilty of refusing to testify to the innocence of another because of selfishness?
* Have I stolen the property of others? Have I desired it unjustly and inordinately? Have I damaged it? Have I made restitution of other people’s property and made good their loss?
* If I have been injured, have I been ready to make peace for the love of Christ and to forgive, or do I harbor hatred and the desire for revenge?

**Christ our Lord says: “Be perfect as your Father is perfect.”**

* Where is my life really leading me? Is the hope of eternal life my inspiration? Have I tried to grow in the life of the Spirit through prayer, reading the word of God and meditating on it, receiving the sacraments, self-denial? Have I been anxious to control my vices, my bad inclinations and passions, e.g., envy, love of food and drink? Have I been proud and boastful, thinking myself better in the sight of God and despising others as less important than myself? Have I imposed my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights?
* What use have I made of time, of health and strength, of the gifts God has given me to be used like the talents in the Gospel? Do I use them to become more perfect every day? Or have I been lazy and too much given to leisure?
* Have I been patient in accepting the sorrows and disappointments of life? How have I performed mortification so as to “fill up what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ”? Have I kept the precept of fasting and abstinence?
* Have I kept my senses and my whole body pure and chaste as a temple of the Holy Spirit consecrated for resurrection and glory, and as a sign of God’s faithful love for men and women, a sign that is seen most perfectly in the sacrament of matrimony? Have I dishonored my body by fornication, impurity, unworthy conversation of thoughts, evil desires, or actions? Have I given in to sensuality? Have I indulged in reading, conversations, shows, and entertainments that offend against Christian and human decency? Have I encouraged others to sin by my own failure to maintain these standards? Have I been faithful to the moral law in my married life?
* Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?
* Have I always tried to act in the true freedom of the sons of God according to the law of the Spirit, or am I the slave of forces within me?