

## Reconciliation

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Our Catholic Church treasures the sacrament of reconciliation. Many parishes offer a communal celebration of penance, especially during Advent and Lent. But individual reconciliation is usually available every week of the year.

If you'd like to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, here's what to do:

Prepare. Prayerfully recall your sins. Some will be specific actions. Some represent a more general pattern of behavior.

Go to the priest. Visit when he's in the reconciliation room or ask for an appointment. You may either kneel anonymously behind a screen, or sit in a chair where you may speak face to face. Be welcome. You and the priest may greet each other. Make the Sign of the Cross. He may urge you to have confidence in God. You may indicate the interval since your last confession or anything else that will help. Just use common sense. Either you or the priest may read from Scripture.

Confess your sins. Some penitents begin with a formula like, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned." But you don't have to. Let the priest know your sins. You may discuss the sins you confess, so the priest can give you the best counsel.

Receive a penance. The priest will recommend some action to do after you leave to indicate to God the sincerity in your heart. Usually he suggests prayer or self-denial. If it sounds difficult, let him know.

Pray for forgiveness. The priest may invite you to say a prayer of sorrow aloud. If you remember the Act of Contrition, you may use it. But you may also speak from your heart.

Receive absolution. This is the best part. The priest proclaims absolution, and God forgives your sins.

Conclude. The priest may say, "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good." If so, answer, "His mercy endures forever." Or he may conclude informally.

Change! Go forth, and with God's help, begin to live a new life of freedom from the slavery of sin!

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