

# How to Go to Confession...

May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all  
the saints,  
whatever good you do and suffering you endure,  
heal your sins,  
help you grow in holiness,  
and reward you with eternal life.  
Go in peace.

—*Rite of Penance*, no. 93

**1 PREPARATION:** Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26).

**2 GREETING:** The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

**3 THE SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [*give days, months, or years*] since my last confession.”

**4 CONFESSION:** Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

**5 PENANCE:** The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

**6 ACT OF CONTRITION:** After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

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.

(*Rite of Penance*, no. 45)

**7 ABSOLUTION:** The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”

**8 PRAISE:** The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (*Rite of Penance*, no. 47).

**9 DISMISSAL:** The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

If it has been a while since your last confession, remember, “Do not fear” (Is 41:10). The priest will help guide you. And feel free to take this how-to guide with you! (For more information, visit [www.usccb.org/confession](http://www.usccb.org/confession).)

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## Examination of Conscience Prior to Confession

Recall your sins. Calmly and honestly ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God and the Church's commandments.

- Do I pray to God every day? Have I thanked God for His gifts to me?
- Did I put my faith in danger through reading material that is hostile to Catholic teachings? Have I been involved in non-Catholic sects? Did I engage in superstitious practices, such as palm-reading or fortune telling?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse, or take a false oath?
- Did I miss Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Did I fast and abstain on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents or lawful superiors in important matters?
- Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Was I disrespectful?
- Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs? Did I consent to, recommend, advise, or actively take part in an abortion?
- Did I willfully look at indecent pictures, watch immoral movies, or read immoral books or magazines? Did I engage in impure jokes or conversations? Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or commit impure acts, alone or with others? Did I use artificial means to prevent conception?
- Did I steal or damage another's property? Have I been honest in my business relations?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by gossiping about others? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters?
- Have I envied other people?

*Excerpted from How to Make a Good Confession, by Rev. Kris Stubna, S.T.D., copyright © 2012*