

Acts of Contrition

Praying the Act of Contrition (Sorrow) is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance. The prayer expresses one's heartfelt sorrow for sin, and states the commitment, with the help of God's grace, to live a better life. Each Catholic should know an Act of Contrition by memory. Some prayers are listed below:

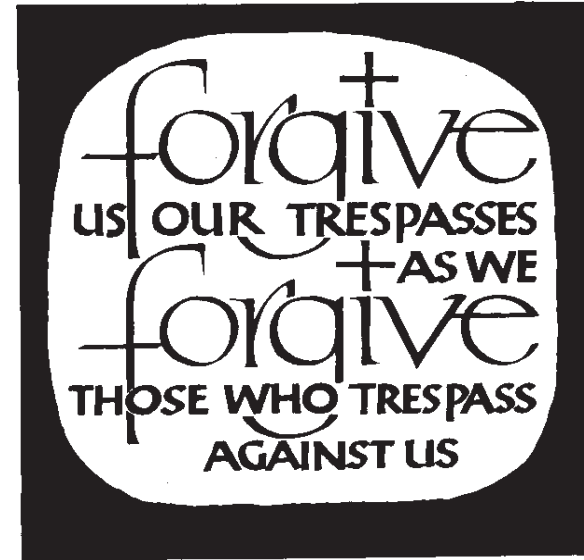
O my God, because you are so good.
I am very sorry that I have sinned against you;
and with your help I will try not to sin again. Amen.

I love you Jesus, my love above all things,
I repent with my whole heart for having offended you.
Never permit me to separate myself from you again
Grant that I may always love you
and then do with me what you will.

God our Father, I am heartily sorry for all my sins,
because they offend you, who are infinitely good,
and I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace,
never to offend you again. Amen

O 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. Amen.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation



The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a tremendous opportunity for making a new beginning in our lives of faith. This sacrament brings us the forgiveness of God and his Church as we recognise our need for his mercy and pardon in our lives. It is not easy for us to admit our sinfulness – and it can be very difficult for us to face squarely our own weaknesses and failings. And sometimes we even shrink back from recognising the gifts God has given us and the good that we do in life, especially the love we share with one another.

To celebrate this Sacrament fruitfully we need to spend some moments looking at our lives and asking for the grace of God to see ourselves as we are. Preparation is essential if this Sacrament is to be relevant to our lives. So we should pray for a spirit of humility and for the grace to honestly evaluate our lives – the good things we do, the love we share with others, the gifts God has given us as well as the missed opportunities to use our gifts, to love others, to do good.

Preparing to Celebrate the Sacrament

A Prayer for Light and Courage

God our Father in heaven, send your Holy Spirit into my heart. Point out my sins. Supply the courage I need to confess them honestly. Help me to believe you are always willing to forgive. Remove my sin and guilt, fill me with peace, then send me away strong, free and determined I will be better in the days ahead. I ask for these things through Jesus, your Son, who is my Lord and Saviour. Amen.

From the Prophet Ezekiel

“I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh instead, so that they will keep my laws and respect my observances and put them into practice. Then they shall be my people and I will be their God.”

Some Things to Think About

What kind of relationship do I have with God?

Is it real and personal? Is my faith nourished by the Word of God and by the gift of Christ in the Eucharist? Do I worship God with his community each weekend and so strengthen the bonds of love and unity in my own parish? Do I give a good example to others, especially my own family, by the way I pray at home and in church? Do I allow God to forgive me?

What kind of relationship do I have with other people?

With my family – husband, wife, children, brothers, sisters? With my neighbours? And those with whom I work? And what about fellow parishioners? Am I kind and considerate? Understanding? Loving? Respectful? Charitable? Am I critical of others? Do I gossip? Do I forgive? Do I give a good example to others in my speech and actions?

How to Go to Confession

After a thorough examination of conscience, the Penitent approaches the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You must have both true contrition (*be truly sorry*), and a firm resolve to amend one's life.

The Penitent begins:

“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (*how long?*) since my last confession. These are my sins...”

Tell the priest your sins. A good confession means confessing all the sins you remember, since your last confession, including the number of times any mortal sins were committed.

After confessing all your sins, say:

“For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry”.

The priest may discuss your confession with you and then gives you a penance to be said later and asks you to say an Act of Contrition, using a formal prayer, or your own words.

After you have said an Act of Contrition the priest then gives you Absolution, forgiving all sins committed since your last confession.

The priest may finish by saying ‘Go in peace’ or something similar.

There is no need to use these exact words, they are here as a help and a suggestion. If you are unsure what to say or what to do, please ask the priest for help. The Priest is there to help you through this celebration to grow in your love for God.

Many ‘Confessional Boxes’ offer an option of sitting behind a screen or in front of the priest. You may choose whatever you prefer.