

How to Go to Confession



Preparation is key. We call this an “examination of conscience.” Written guides can be helpful. When you approach the priest, make the “Sign of the Cross” and say, “Bless me Father for I have sinned, it’s been....(say how long)....since my last confession.”

Then, tell the priest your sins, simply and honestly. Be straightforward. Don’t disguise or minimize them. There is usually no need to give many details or an explanation.

Grave (mortal) sins should be confessed by name and number or frequency, to the best of your memory. For instance: “I committed adultery three times and bought Plan-B twice.” “I missed Mass almost every Sunday for the past three years.” “I lied about someone while gossiping and harmed their reputation.” “I’m a lawyer, and I told a client to lie under oath.” “I got drunk three times.”

Confessing venial sins is called a “devotional confession.” Though it’s not required, it’s recommended. It helps us to grow perfect in the love of God and neighbor.

Tell the priest when you have finished your confession. He may offer encouragement or advice. Feel free to ask him questions. Then the priest will give you a penance, asking you to either pray, fast or perform an act of charity. The priest will then ask you to say an “Act of Contrition,” which expresses sorrow for sin and a resolution to avoid sin. Finally, the priest will give you Absolution, a prayer in which Christ himself forgives your sins.

The priest will dismiss you saying, “The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace,” to which you answer, “Thanks be to God.” Then do your penance as soon as possible.

An Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen