

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION?

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- 1. Prepare.** Spend some time examining your conscience (next page). Pray to the Lord, asking for forgiveness and expressing your repentance and your willingness to change.
- 2. Go to the priest.** When you come to the priest, he will greet you and make the sign of the cross. He may choose to recite a reading from scripture, after which you say: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. These are my sins..."
- 3. Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest.** You might want to discuss the circumstance and root causes of your sins and ask the priest for guidance, but remember, confession is not the same thing as spiritual direction. Keep it brief and to the point.
- 4. Listen and pray.** Listen to the guidance that the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then say the **Act of Contrition**:

"Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they have offended you, my God, who are all good and worthy of all my love. I firmly intend, with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen."
- 5. Receive the absolution.** The priest will then absolve you or your sins and will say something along the lines of "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in Peace." To which you respond, "Thanks be to God."
- 6. Do your penance.** Sin weakens our relationship with God and our neighbors. The absolution we receive in confession takes away the sin, but it does not remedy all of the problems the sin causes. We must do something to make amends and repair the harm done. That is why the priest gives us a penance. Penance can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service to a neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all, the patient acceptance of our individual cross to bear that will bring us closer to Christ. Do your penance as soon as possible.