

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we encounter in a real and concrete way the love and mercy of God. Through the sacrament, God forgives us all of our sins – without reservation – those we have remembered, and those we have perhaps forgotten, as long as three conditions are met:

- We have confessed all *mortal* sins that we are aware of.
- We have a firm purpose of amendment (a real and heartfelt desire to not repeat the sins we are confessing).
- We are truly sorry for the sins we have committed and the harm we have caused to God and to others.

If any of these three conditions are not met, the sacrament is not valid. When we speak to the priest in confession, we are speaking not to the priest but to Christ, and so we are called to be truly open and honest as to our sins and our actions.

Remember, anything you say in confession cannot be repeated by the priest. He is bound by the seal of confession and will not break it.

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT

Prior to celebrating the sacrament, we are invited to make a good examination of conscience: to fully prepare and to identify those areas of our lives we wish to bring to the sacrament.

When you enter the confessional, please sit or kneel, and the priest will begin with the sign of the cross, you can then begin: “Bless me father, for I have sinned [*optionally, not required but encouraged to help the priest offer counsel: and it is [enter length of time] since my last confession, I am [married/ single/ religious – mention state in life]*] and these are my sins.

You can then tell the priest your sins, and he will offer some counsel followed by a penance – this is a prayer which you should say privately after the confession – before inviting you to make an act of contrition and giving you absolution, at which point you are forgiven your sins.

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins,
for not loving others, and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus, and not sin again. Amen.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

- Have I rejected or neglected my faith? Have I refused to defend my faith, or been ashamed of it? Is there any aspect of my faith that I do not accept?
- Have I taken the Lord's name in vain? Have I been superstitious *or* put my trust in witch doctors, fortune-tellers or any other like these? Have I shown disrespect for any holy things, places or people?
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I been attentive during the Mass or do I wilfully get distracted?
- Have I received Holy Communion with a grave sin on my conscience?
- Have I received Holy Communion without proper reverence?
- Have I acted with impatience, anger or jealousy?
- Have I fostered resentments or been unwilling to forgive?
- Have I been verbally or physically violent with others?
- Have I taken part in or encouraged abortion, euthanasia or any other means of taking human life?
- Have I been hateful or judgemental in thoughts or deeds? Have I looked down on others?
- Have I spoken badly about others, engaging in gossip?
- Have I consumed alcohol excessively or taken drugs?
- Have I looked at impure videos or websites? Have I committed impure acts on my own? Have I been involved in impure acts with someone else? Am I living with someone as if I were married when I am not?
- If I am married, do I seek to love my spouse above all else? Do I put my marriage and my children first? Am I faithful to my spouse?
- Do I let my work occupy time and energy that family and friends deserve? Have I been honest and diligent in my work?
- Have I been proud or selfish in my thoughts or actions? Have I neglected the poor and those in need? Have I spent money on my own personal comfort and luxury, forgetting my responsibilities to others and the Church?
- Have I stolen or cheated anyone at work? Have I received or given bribes or participated in sharing funds from questionable sources?
- Have I given in to laziness? Have I preferred physical comfort to service of others? Have I neglected the responsibility to bring others closer to God through my example and words?
- Have I told lies?