

How to Go to Confession

As you prepare for your Confession, you might find this step-by-step explanation helpful. If it has been a while since your last Confession, remember, “Do not fear” (Is 41:10). The priest will help guide you through your Confession if you need help. Feel free to take this explanation of how to go to Confession with you as well.

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).

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

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.”

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.”

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.

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:

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.

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

Praise: The priest might say “Peace be with you” or a word of praise for the mercy of God such as, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” Your response would be, “His mercy endures forever”.

Dismissal: The priest will say something like “The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.” You can respond, “Thanks be to God”.