

## At the End of Confession

Listen to the words of absolution — the sacramental forgiveness of the Church through the priest. God forgives our sins. You may make the sign of the cross with the priest. If he closes by saying, “**Give thanks to the Lord for He is good,**” answer “**His mercy endures forever.**”

### Remember

If you need help — especially if you have been away for some time — simply ask the priest and he will help you by “walking” you through the steps to make a good confession.

## After Confession

*Complete your penance.* It serves to repair the harm caused by sin in our life and it seeks to re-establish habits befitting a disciple of Christ.

*Give thanks to God for forgiving you.* God’s mercy is without end. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next confession.

*Change your life.* Go forward with God’s help and begin to live a new life of freedom from the slavery of sin.

*Resolve to return often to the sacrament of penance and reconciliation.* We Catholics are fortunate to have this sacrament. It is the ordinary way to be reconciled with God and the Church. The sacrament is a powerful help to rid us of our weaknesses, to grow in holiness, and to lead a balanced and virtuous life. It is a celebration of God’s forgiveness.

## Sin in my Life

Sin has been present in human history and is present in our lives. As a Catholic follower of Christ, I must make an effort to recognize sin in my actions, words and omissions.

The Gospels show the importance of forgiveness of sins. The lives of the saints prove that persons who grow in holiness have a stronger sense of sin, sorrow for sins, and a mature need for the sacrament of penance and reconciliation.

## The Differences in Sins

As a result of Original Sin, human nature is weakened. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ’s grace, takes away Original Sin, and turns us back toward God. The consequences of this weakness and the inclination to evil persist, and we often commit personal or actual sin.

There are two kinds of actual sin, *mortal and venial.*

Mortal sin is a deadly offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul. Three simultaneous conditions constitute a mortal sin:

- 1) the act must be something very serious;
- 2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done;
- 3) the person must have sufficient freedom of will.

Office of Worship  
Archdiocese of Dubuque

# A Guide for Individual Reconciliation

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*The basic requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the “prodigal son” and to acknowledge our sins with true sorrow before the priest.*



“To those who have been far away from the sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love, I make this appeal: come back to this source of grace, do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you. He will heal you, and you will be at peace with God!”

Pope John Paul II

## Before Celebrating the Sacrament

*Be truly sorry for your sins.* The most important act of the penitent, is heartfelt contrition, a rejection of the sin committed, and a resolution not to commit it again. Flowing from a love for God, the resolution is a sign of true repentance. God's grace, in cooperation with the intention to change, gives strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

## Examination of Conscience

Before going to confession make an honest review of your sins since your last sacramental confession. It is helpful to review the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church:

1. Is God and the pursuit of holiness the goal of my life? Have I denied my faith? Have I placed my trust in false teachings or substitutes for God? Did I despair of God's mercy?
2. Have I avoided the profane use of God's name in my speech? Have I broken a solemn vow or promise?
3. Have I honored every Sunday (and holy day) by worship at Mass and by avoiding unnecessary work? Was I inattentive at Mass, or late for Mass, or did I leave early? Have I neglected my prayer life?
4. Have I shown Christ-like respect to parents, spouse, family members, and those in authority? Have I been attentive to the religious education and formation of my children? Have I set a good example?
5. Have I cared for the health and safety of myself and others? Did I abuse drugs or alcohol? Have I supported in any way abortion, "mercy killing" or suicide?
6. Was I impatient, angry, envious, proud, jealous, revengeful, or lazy? Have I forgiven others?
7. Have I been just in my dealings with others? Do I discriminate against people because of race or other reasons?



8. Have I been chaste in thought and word? Have I used sex only within marriage and while open to procreating life? Did I deliberately look at impure pictures on the internet, TV, or in books?
9. Have I stolen anything from another, from my employer, from government? If so, am I ready to repay it? Did I fulfill my contracts? Did I recklessly gamble, depriving my family of necessities?
10. Have I spoken ill of any other person? Have I always told the truth? Have I kept secrets and confidences?
11. Have I permitted sexual thoughts about someone to whom I am not married?
12. Have I desired what belongs to other people? Have I wished ill on another?
13. Have I been faithful to sacramental living (Holy Communion and Penance)?
14. Have I helped make my parish community stronger and holier? Have I contributed to the support of the Church?
15. Have I done penance by abstaining and fasting on obligatory days? Have I fasted before receiving communion?
16. Have I been mindful of the poor, sick, elderly and immigrants? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality and peace?

## During Confession

After prayerfully preparing to receive the sacrament, go into the reconciliation room. You may choose to be face-to-face with the priest or use the screen for anonymity.

You and the priest may greet one another. Make the sign of the cross, "**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**" The priest may urge you to have confidence in God's mercy and love.

You may indicate the interval since your last confession or anything else that may help. You or the priest may read a passage from the Bible.

Say the sins that you remember. In order to make a good confession one must confess all sins, according to kind and number. You may want to discuss the sins you confess so the priest can offer practical advice.

Listen to the words of the priest. You will receive a penance. Do this penance to indicate to God the sincerity in your heart.

You will be invited to express a prayer of sorrow and your intention to begin a new life. This is called an act of contrition.

### Act of Contrition

(Two popular forms)

**O 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 I have offended you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.**

— OR —

**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. Amen.**