

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife. Am I envious of another's spouse? Have I consented to impure thoughts? Do I try to control my imagination? Am I reckless and irresponsible in the books I read and the movies I watch?

10. You shall not desire your neighbors goods. Am I envious of the possessions of others? Am I resentful and bitter over my position in life?

### Receiving the Sacrament of Penance

*"Bless me Father, for I have sinned..."*

The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission, man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of; takes responsibility for them; and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible. CCC 1455

- When you come before the priest to confess your sins, he will warmly welcome and greet you.
- Begin your confession by making the sign of the cross. The priest invites you to have trust in God. Then you may say "Bless me father, for I have sinned." (It is helpful to tell the priest how long since your last confession and your state in life such as married, single, widowed).
- Confess your sins (name the number and sin); the priest will help you make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy just ask him to help you. You may end your confession with "I am sorry for these and all my sins."
- The priest will assign you a penance and offer advice to help you be a better Christian.
- You will then be asked to make an act of sorrow. (Act of Contrition)

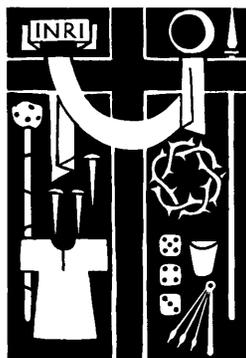
- If you do not know or cannot remember an Act of Contrition you may pray: Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.
- The priest, acting in the person of Christ, will then absolve you from your sins.
- After the Absolution, the priest says "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good." You respond, "His mercy endures forever."
- Then the priest will dismiss you by saying "The Lord has freed you from your sins, go in peace."

### Act of Contrition

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 amend my life. Amen.

*"In the Sacrament of Penance Christ crucified and risen, through his ministers, purifies us with his infinite mercy, restores us to communion with the heavenly Father and our brothers, and makes a gift of his love, joy and peace in us."*

**- Pope Benedict XVI**  
February 15, 2009



Front Cover, *Prodigal Son*. Pencil drawing by Helen Hull Hitchcock. Used with Permission

# Sacrament of Penance And Reconciliation



*"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..."*

- Isaiah 1:18

*"The sins we commit distance us from God, and, if they are not humbly confessed, trusting in divine mercy, they will finally bring about the death of the soul."*

**- Pope Benedict XVI**  
February 15, 2009

This brochure contains a guide to celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

### Why Do I Need this Sacrament?

“Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their Baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the Sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this as ‘the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.’”

- CCC 1446

### What Is Sin?

“Sin is an offense against God as well as against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as ‘an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to eternal law.’”

- Catholic Catechism for Adults pg. 528

### What is the Difference between Mortal or Grave Sin and Venial Sin?

“Mortal Sin is when we consciously and freely choose to do something grave against the divine law (Ten Commandments) and contrary to our final destiny. There are three conditions for a sin to be a mortal sin: grave matter, full knowledge and deliberate consent (freedom). Mortal sin destroys the loving relationship with God that we need for eternal happiness. If not repented, it results in a loss of love and God’s grace and merits eternal punishment in hell, that is, exclusion from the Kingdom of God and thus eternal death. Venial sin is an offense against God in a less serious matter. Though venial sin does not completely destroy the love we need for eternal happiness, it weakens that love and impedes our progress in the practice of virtue and the moral good. Over time, repeated venial sin can have serious consequences.”

- Catholic Catechism for Adults pg. 528



### How Do I Prepare for the Sacrament?

The basic requirements for a good confession are to have the intention of returning to God like the “prodigal son” and acknowledging our sins with true sorrow before the priest.

### True Contrition

“Among the penitent’s acts, contrition occupies the first place. Contrition is ‘sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.’” CCC1451

The essential act of penance on the part of the penitent is contrition. This is a clear and decisive rejection of sins committed together with a resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future out of the love for God and love for neighbor. The resolution is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. This does not mean that a promise never to fall again into sin is necessary. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God’s grace, in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life, will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

### Examining Your Conscience

Ask the help of the Holy Spirit and review your life with God. The Ten Commandments are a helpful guide here.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me. Do I seek to love God with my whole heart and soul? Does He truly hold the first place in my life? Have I been involved with the occult or superstitious practices?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Have I insulted God’s Holy Name or used it lightly or carelessly? Have I wished evil on anyone?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day. Have I missed Mass deliberately on Sunday, the Lord’s Day, or Holy Days of obligation? Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of rest? Have I neglected prayer?

4. Honor your father and your mother. Do I honor and obey my parents? Do I care for them in their old age? Have I neglected my family responsibilities to my spouse and children? Is my family life centered around Christ and his teachings?

5. You shall not kill. Have I murdered or physically harmed anyone? Have I encouraged abortion? Have I abused drugs or alcohol? Have I mutilated myself through sterilization? Have I encouraged others to have themselves sterilized? Have I harbored hatred, anger or resentment in my heart towards anyone? Have I given scandal to anyone by my sins, thereby leading them to sin?

6. You shall not commit adultery. Have I been chaste in thought and word? Have I used the gift of sex only within marriage? Have I been open to the gift of children? Have I given myself sexual gratification? Did I deliberately look at impure TV, pictures, reading, or internet pornography?

7. You shall not steal. Have I taken what is not mine? Am I honest with my employer/ employee? Do I gamble excessively, thereby robbing my family of their needs? Do I seek to share what I have with the poor and needy?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Have I lied, gossiped or spoken behind anyone’s back? Have I ruined anyone’s good name? Do I reveal information that should be confidential? Am I sincere in my dealings with others or am I “two-faced”?

