

## What is Confession?

Confession is a Sacrament in which the priest, in name of God forgives sins when the sinner is heartily sorry for them, sincerely confesses them, and is willing to perform any penance imposed upon him by the confessor.

We must do **five things** in order to make a good confession. They are:

### (1) EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

We must examine our conscience, that is, recall to our mind at least all our **mortal sins** and their **number** as far as possible. Two extremes must be avoided: **excessive** care or anxiety and **carelessness** or negligence. We cannot remember a person, their number and circumstances which may frequently change the nature of the sin without a serious examination of conscience.

The examination must embrace the period following our last good confession. It is always good to confess venial sins also, but there is no obligation to do so. Venial sins can be forgiven by an act of love or sorrow.

### (2) SORROW FOR ONE'S SINS

No sin can be forgiven if the sinner does not repent of it. God cannot forgive a sinner who does not hate his sin and who, consequently, does not sincerely regret having committed it.

**Sorrow** or contrition is a hatred of sin and a true grief of the soul for having offended God. Sorrow can be **perfect** or **imperfect**. A person has perfect sorrow when he hates sin because it offends God our loving Father; while sorrow calls by the fear of hell and everlasting punishments is imperfect, and it does not justify the soul unless it is followed by an actual confession.

A person must repent for **all his sins**, otherwise God will not forgive him. All sins are forgiven for simultaneously, or none are forgiven, for the purpose of confession is to restore grace in the soul. But grace cannot exist where a sin remains unforgiven.

### (3) RESOLUTION (Firm Purpose of Amendment)

A true sorrow and regret necessarily include a firm purpose of avoiding in the future what we regret. A sinner must, therefore, be resolved to avoid sin and proximate occasions of sin, such as breaking off sinful relations, leaving bad company, and places, amusements that have led him into sin.

The resolution is the final test of true sorrow and contrition. Whether a sinner has a true resolution is easily seen by the practice of the means which can prevent his relapse. If he neglects its the ordinary remedies against the relapse, especially prayer, flight from dangerous occasions, efforts to resist temptations, and the reception of the Sacraments, then we may doubt his resolution.

Furthermore a sinner must be resolved to avoid all kinds of sin, that is, not only one or the other sin, but every sin, so as to offend God no more in the future.

#### (4) CONFESSION

In confession we accuse ourselves of our own sins to a lawful priest. A penitent must confess his **own** sins and not those of his relatives or neighbors. He must accuse himself as a sinner in the eyes of God without augmenting or diminishing the number or the grievousness this of his sins.

#### How should we begin our confession?

We should begin our confession this way. Approach the priest, make the sign of the cross, reverence the cross and the Gospel and then say to the priest, "I, a sinner, confess to Almighty God, One in the Holy Trinity, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Mother of God and to you, Father." The penitent continues, "My last confession was (here he mentions this time) ... ago. These are my sins that I have committed as discovered in the preparation for confession." If he finds any particular sin hard to confess, let him say to the priest, "Father, help me, for there is a saying that I do not know how to confess."

As soon as the confession is completed, the penitent adds, "Father, and these are all the sins I remember. I include also all the sins of my past life, and in particular the sin of ... I am sorry for all the sins with which I have offended God, my heavenly Father, and merited His punishments."

At this time the priest will pronounce absolution. If advice or explanation is needed, you may ask the priest for a private time to talk.

This is a beautiful story of Sacramental confession. The infernal chains are broken; the devil leaves the soul; hell closes beneath the sinner and heaven opens above him; he becomes a child of God again and the role of innocence is restored to him. St. John

Chrysostom says: “During the few moments spent in confessions a resurrection occurs more miraculous than the raising of Lazarus from the tomb.”

#### (5) PENANCE

Penance is a satisfaction in atonement for punishments still due to our sins. Satisfaction in braces prayer, fasting, alms giving and every good work offered to God as expiation for unlawful pleasures taken against the law of God or the Church.

### **PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION**

**Come, O Holy Ghost, enlighten my mind and touch my heart with Thy divine grace that I may discover my sins and sincerely repent for them. Strengthen my will and that I may make a strong resolution of amendment. O Divine Consoler of repentant souls, gave me Thy grace that I may confess all my sins to the priest, the earthly representative of Jesus Christ.**

**Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, protectress and refuge of sinners, I pray for me that I may make a good confession and be reconciled to Thy Divine Son Jesus, my Savior Who shed His precious blood for my salvation. (Say the Hail Mary or Bohoroditsa Divo three times).**

### **PRAYER AFTER CONFESSION**

**O my dear and beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, eternal thanks be to Thee for the great Sacrament of penance. Thou wilt not the death of a sinner. Wherefore Thou hast given us this great Sacrament of divine mercy and love, which I had just received. Through this august Sacrament Thou art once more my Father and I am once more Thy child, united again unto Thee through sanctifying grace. Now I make a strong resolution: ‘Never again will I offend Thee, never again will I commit sin; nay, I prefer to die rather than offend Thee again. In the future all that I am, although I have, all that I do shall be dedicated to Thy glory and to Thy service.’**