



**“Come to me, all you who labour and are  
burdened, and I will give you rest.”  
Jesus is waiting for you in the Sacrament of mercy.**

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*“Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of  
Confession for a specific reason. God is our  
Father and wants nothing more than for us to  
come home.”*

*Richard, Richmond, BC*

*“Confession is an act of honesty and  
courage -- an act of entrusting ourselves,  
beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and  
forgiving God.”*

*Blessed John Paul II*



Archdiocese  
of Vancouver

## Overview

### **Q. Why Confession? What happens as a result?**

Christ's love is shown in the fact that he seeks the lost and heals the sick. This is why he gave us this sacrament, to free us from sin and strengthen us in our spiritual weakness. (Note: It's also often called Reconciliation or Penance). Among the incredible effects of Confession are reconciliation with God and the Church, restoration of sanctifying grace if lost through mortal sin, freedom, joy, a peaceful conscience, consolation, moral strength, and a fresh start. Going to Confession is like diving into the ocean of God's mercy.

### **Q. We have Baptism which reconciles us with God, so why do we need Confession?**

Baptism does free us from the power of sin and death and brings us into the new life of the children of God, but it doesn't free us from human weakness and the inclination to sin. That's why we need a place where we can be reconciled with God over and over. That place is Confession.

### **Q. Where does the sacrament come from?**

From the Lord himself. Jesus forgave sins in the power of the Holy Spirit, and he handed that power on to the apostles when he said to them on Easter Sunday: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:22-23). This sacred power is handed down to their successors, the bishops, and the priests who assist them.

### **Q. Why do I need to confess to a priest?**

Put simply, it's God's plan. The priest is the minister of the sacrament acting in the person of Christ. In fact, the confession of sins to a priest is the only ordinary way to have mortal sins forgiven after Baptism. Also, God knows how we can rationalize our sins away and sweep them under the rug. And so he wants us to tell our sins and to acknowledge them in a personal encounter. Know that we fall into the loving arms of our heavenly Father when we go to a priest and confess.

## Common Concerns

### **Q. What if I'm embarrassed because I don't know how to prepare, or what to do in Confession?**

No problem—that's the reason for this confession kit. If in doubt, feel free to ask the priest to guide you during Confession. He's there to serve you.

### **Q. Won't I shock the priest with what I say?**

Remember that priests have heard thousands of confessions over the years, and there are really no new sins. It's a great privilege for priests to hear confessions and be instruments of the Father's mercy.

### **Q. Will the priest think badly of me afterwards?**

No, quite the opposite. He'll be inspired by your humility and courage, and likely won't remember your sins anyway. And remember, priests have to go to Confession, too. Even the Pope has to confess his sins to another priest.

### **Q. May a priest later repeat something he heard in Confession?**

Under no circumstances. If a priest did tell any person—even the police—something he heard in the confessional, he would be excommunicated.

### **Q. I'm divorced. I have family members who are gay. I thought we weren't welcome in the Church.**

Every one of us in the Church is a sinner, and everyone is welcome regardless of our past or present situation. Talk to your pastor about your situation and any concerns you have.

### **Q. I've done some really awful things. Will God forgive me?**

"Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rom. 5:20). God's mercy is greater than all our sins. Assuming you are truly sorry for what you've done and willing to make necessary changes, the answer is YES. God longs for you to return to his merciful Heart.



Note: if you've been away from the Church or Confession for a while and would like to talk more at length with the priest, feel free to make an appointment to see him in his office.

## These are the five necessary things for a good Confession:

- (1) Examination of Conscience (see next page)
- (2) Sorrow for having offended God
- (3) A firm decision to sin no more (surely you'll fall again; it's the intention to not sin that matters)
- (4) Confession of our sins
- (5) Penance: doing certain acts imposed by the priest to repair some of the damage caused by sin

### HERE'S WHAT YOU DO IN CONFESSION. IF IN DOUBT, FEEL FREE TO ASK FOR GUIDANCE.

Say: "BLESS ME, FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED."  
(make the sign of the cross)  
IT HAS BEEN... (State how long) ... SINCE MY LAST  
CONFESSION. THESE ARE MY SINS."

Now confess your sins, plainly and clearly. Every mortal sin must be confessed. If you sincerely can't remember, just do your best.

When you have finished, say:  
"I AM SORRY FOR THESE AND ALL MY SINS."

The priest will now offer encouragement or advice. He will tell you what to do for your penance. He may now ask you to say an Act of Contrition (see right). He then says the beautiful words of absolution and your sins are forgiven! To conclude, he may say "Go in peace" or something similar.  
Answer: "THANKS BE TO GOD."

When you leave the confessional: Thank the Lord for forgiving you and do your penance as soon as possible. And pray for strength to avoid these sins and the near occasions of sin (persons, places, or things that may lead you to sin) in the future. Lastly, welcome back! All heaven rejoices when we repent and return to the Father.

## An 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 Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.

In His name, my God, have mercy.

*Amen.*



*Pray to God for courage, honesty, and hope and ask yourself a few questions in preparation for Confession.*

## **Love the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your strength...**

- Have I kept the gift of faith in God?
- Do I trust in God?
- Have I prayed?
- Have I observed the Lord's Day (Sunday) by worshipping at Mass and resting from unnecessary work?
- Have I respected God's holy name?

## **Love your neighbour as yourself...**

- How have I extended love and respect to my family, my parents, my children, my nation?
- Have I respected life from conception to natural death? Done no harm to anyone? What about anger or resentments or endangering others or myself?
- Have I respected God's gift of my sexuality? Reserved that gift's full expression to marriage and been open to generating new life? What about thoughts about others? Or acting out with them or with myself? What about a general sense of respect for sexuality and reverence for this gift of God?
- Have I respected the goods of others? Not taken anything nor damaged anything? Worked honestly and justly compensated those who worked for me? Upheld principles of justice?
- Have I respected the truth by not lying and not damaging the reputation of others?
- Have I been respectful of others and what they have in my thoughts or have lust, envy, and jealousy held a grip on me?
- Have I cared for those in need through outreach and support? Have I contributed to the common good of the society in which I live?

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