

HOW TO CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

- ✓ Decide if you want to go “**face-to-face**” or **anonymously**. There will be some confessional stations that have the option for an anonymous confession. When you enter the confessional, Father will begin by making the **SIGN OF THE CROSS - YOU ALSO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS!**
- ✓ You begin **CONFESSING YOUR SINS** by saying: “*Forgive me Father, for I have sinned, my last confession was (i.e., one month ago/during Advent/5 years ago/this is my first confession, etc.) and these are my sins*”, **then confess your sins...**
- ✓ Father will express God’s mercy and love, and perhaps offer some words of spiritual guidance, then give you a **PENANCE** – a small act of prayer or charity that expresses your sorrow and your resolve to go and sin no more.
- ✓ Father will ask you to pray an **ACT OF CONTRITION**, a prayer expressing your sorrow and your resolve not to sin again. We will be praying an **ACT OF CONTRITION together** so there is no need for you to pray it again, unless Father suggests it. It’s a good idea to memorize the **ACT OF CONTRITION** as it is a wonderful prayer of trust and faith. Below is one example:

ACT OF CONTRITION:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and in 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.

- ✓ Father will pray the beautiful prayer of **ABSOLUTION**, and then finish by making the **SIGN OF THE CROSS** again – **YOU BE SURE TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS TOO!** After this prayer, you leave the confessional with a purified soul and a joy in your heart. If Father says: “**Go in peace**” your response should be: “**Thanks be to God!**” Be sure to fulfill the **PENANCE** that Father has given you.

Examination of Conscience

Prayerfully, honestly and humbly reflect on the following...

First Commandment: I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me...

Do I truly love God above all, or do I give importance to other "gods" in my life: money, success, reputation, grudges, control, addictions? Do I turn to God in prayer daily, or only when I need something?

Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain...

Do I show disrespect for God's name by using it in frustration, anger or inappropriate humor? Am I embarrassed to talk about God or the importance of my faith?

Third Commandment: Keep holy the Lord's Day...

Am I faithful in attending Sunday Mass, as well as Holy Days of Obligation? Do I participate at Mass by singing and responding, or do I just sit there, watching the clock? Do I acknowledge the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and receive the Eucharist with respect and reverence? Do I keep the Eucharistic Fast of not eating an hour before receiving?

Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and mother...

Do I bring peace and harmony to my family situations, or am I a constant source of hurt to my loved ones? Do I say "I love you" and "thank you" to those in my family? Do I truly "honor" my loved ones?

Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill...

Have I injured others through carelessness, abuse or selfishness? Am I verbally abusive to those that I love? Have I placed myself or others in danger due to reckless use of alcohol or drugs? Am I courageous about respecting life and the dignity of others? Do I forgive others who have hurt me, or do I seek revenge?

Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery...

Do I treat sexuality as a gift from God and express this gift only in the sacrament of matrimony? Have I dishonored myself or others through impure thoughts, words and actions? Have I tempted others to sin in this manner? Do I struggle with pornography: internet, movies, television, magazines?

Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal...

Have I stolen, disrespected or vandalized the properties of others? Have I cheated at work or at school, or on legal documents and/or my taxes?

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against my neighbor...

Have I lied to avoid trouble or difficult situations? Can I be trusted with a secret? Do I gossip or repeat private information about people, even if it is true? Do I lie about people or situations, just to get attention?

Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife...

Do I respect the commitments of others and help them remain faithful? Have I said or done anything that has made a mockery of marriage or been a cause of temptation? Have I acted inappropriately or flirtatiously with others when my spouse is not present?

Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet thy neighbor's goods...

Am I satisfied with what God has given me, or am I bitter, spiteful or envious? Do I live beyond my means? Do I strive to impress others with what I have? Am I faithful in my credit and debt obligations? Do I give of my means to the poor, the homeless, those who need shelter?