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# Meeting Jesus In Confession

If you know you have hurt someone you love, what should you do? The best thing to do is to go to that person and say you are sorry. It is not enough just to think about how sorry you are. A good friendship calls for more. A true friend will go to the person he has hurt, say he is sorry, and make up and be friends again.

In the sacrament of Penance, that is what we do with Jesus. We go to Him, tell Him we are sorry, resolve not to sin again, accept His forgiveness, and keep our friendship with Him alive and strong.

To prepare ourselves for this Sacrament, there are certain things we must do. First we ask God the Holy Spirit, Who lives inside us, to help us remember our sins. We think about what we have done wrong and how many times we have done it.

Next, we think about how our sins offend Jesus and we are sorry for them. We make up our minds not to commit the same sins again, and we say an Act of Contrition. Contrition means sorrow. An Act of Contrition is a prayer telling God we are sorry and we hate our sins. In the Act of Contrition we say we hate sin because we know it can keep us from Heaven, but much more importantly, because it offends God. We tell God that He is all good and deserving of all our love. We ask for His grace to do better in the future.

After our silent Act of Contrition, it is time to receive the sacrament. We go into the confessional or reconciliation room where the priest welcomes us. Together we make the Sign of the Cross. The priest may read to us from the Bible. Usually there are words about God's mercy and love.



We tell the priest how long it has been since our last confession, then we confess our sins since that time. After we are all finished, the priest talks to us about what we have told him. Then he gives us a penance, which can be some prayers or action that helps to make up for the wrong we have done to God and to others. (We will do the penance after our confession is over.) Then we say the Act of Contrition out loud.

Before we leave the confessional, the priest will absolve us. This means that he uses his Christ-given power to forgive all our sins. When we hear the words of absolution, we know that Jesus Himself is forgiving us through the priest. He says, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." We accept the absolution by answering, "Amen." This is a beautiful moment, because God has completely forgiven us. He is giving us a fresh start.

Every time we receive the sacrament of Penance, Jesus is with us, healing our hearts. We always confess our sins privately to a priest, usually in the confessional. Sometimes, at a communal Penance service, all the people in the church prepare together for Confession and then confess and receive absolution individually. In cases of necessity where to hear individual confessions of large numbers of people is impossible, a priest may give general absolution to all the people. But those people then have to make a private, individual confession as soon as they are able.

Jesus waits for us in this sacrament because He has so much grace to give us. Let us try to go to Him often.

### **Words to Know:**

examination of conscience      penance  
sorrow for sins      contrition  
sacrament of Penance

### ACT OF CONTRITION

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend 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.*

### THE WORDS OF ABSOLUTION

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and Resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Q. 47** *How many things are required to make a good confession?*

To make a good confession five things are required: 1) examination of conscience; 2) sorrow for sins; 3) the intention of not committing sin again; 4) the accusation of our sin; 5) satisfaction or penance.

**Q. 48** *How is the examination of conscience done?*

The examination of conscience is done by recalling to mind the sins we have committed in thoughts, words, and omissions against the Commandments of God, beginning from our last good confession.

**Q. 49** *What is sorrow?*

Sorrow or repentance is displeasure and hatred for the sins we have committed, which bring us to form the intention of not sinning again.