

DIRECTION FOR A BETTER CONFESSION



Your REPENTANCE is the Key !

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A Catholic Booklet for Free Distribution

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“Unless you repent, you will all perish...”

– The words of Jesus in Luke 13:5

When we approach the Sacrament of Confession, we have to realise that the ‘Absolution’ which the ordained priest ministers to us will NOT be effective unless the individual person is truly sincere and repentant. This is because, unseen by us and understood only through faith, Jesus Himself is behind the priest in the confessional; and as indicated above, Jesus desires true repentance.

As a person going for
Confession, ask yourself
the following 4 questions:

- ☆ 1. **Am I in a state of repentance and sincere remorse for my sins & do I really feel sorry for having offended God?**

When you realise your guilt, you shall confess the sin that you have committed. – Lev 5:5

☆ **2. Have I made a firm decision not to commit the same sins again?**

For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgement ...
– Heb 10:26

☆ **3. Have I decided that I will avoid the situations that caused me to sin?**

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. – James 4:7

☆ **4. Do I strongly desire not just to come out of my sin, but also to make up for the damage caused by it?**

When a man or a woman wrongs another, breaking faith with the Lord, that person incurs guilt and shall confess the sin that has been committed. The person shall make full restitution for the wrong. – Num 5:5-7

If your answer is ‘NO’ to any of the above 4 questions, then you need to understand that Confession as a Sacrament will NOT be effective in your life. It remains NULL & VOID. The transfer of grace through the priest’s Absolution depends on your co-operation as well. This is because you are not a mere puppet in God’s hands, but He looks at you as His child and seeks to develop a friendship with you. He expects a response of sincerity in you which you are free to adopt without being forced to.

Another important question:

Do I desire to work towards a deeper personal prayer life & holiness, & to work towards increasing my faith after confessing my sins?

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. – Heb 11:6

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

– Psalm 51:17



Desire for HOLINESS is a MUST for Sacramental graces to flow

Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. – Heb 12:14

Holiness is neither sinlessness nor being externally religious. It is an attitude of sincere readiness to surrender to God. We need to acknowledge our weakness and abandon ourselves to Him so that He can put His holiness into us. We have to humbly admit that without Him, coming out of sin is IMPOSSIBLE. He helps us in our weakness and is constantly inviting us into developing an authentic and personal relationship with Him through Jesus. Only through this relationship, the Sacrament of Confession can be effective and thereby can make the way for further graces to be instilled in our lives.

“It is human to sin, but diabolic to persist in sin.”
– St. Catherine of Siena

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RETURNING TO GOD is a MUST for Sacramental graces to flow

Another question:

“Am I truly longing to return to God?”

This is what the Sacrament of Confession is all about!

This will involve a decision to spend time with Him every day in prayer and thereby, one can experience being in the Father arms like the Prodigal son did (Luke 15).

Since Christianity is more of a relationship of freewill and surrender than a religion of following rules, returning to God is a pre- requisite and a mandatory condition for us to experience God’s embrace.

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord.

– Mal 3:7b

“Remember, the sinner who is sorry for his sins is closer to God than the just man who boasts of his good works.” – St. Padre Pio



**Desire to FORGIVE OTHERS is a
MUST for Sacramental graces to flow**

Let's not forget that forgiveness from God involves our sincere desire to forgive others, which God is always willing to help us achieve. Without this happening, you cannot expect God to forgive you. Hence, approaching the Sacrament without this attitude becomes meaningless. We pray in the "Our Father" –

Forgive us our sins AS we forgive those who sin against us. – Matt 6:12

The 3 points:

- Desire for holiness
- Returning to God
- Forgiveness to others

Without these as our priorities,
it is unrealistic and illogical
to expect God's
forgiveness to us!

Be aware of DECEPTION

Not all who go in for Confession come out forgiven, even after doing the penance. It is the interior disposition of heart and the grace that follows in prayer that shows that the forgiveness is complete. The sacramental grace of a Confession done with true repentance may not be explosive or tangible, but it will surely lead the soul into a more Christ centred life. This outward sign needs to be realised. Since deception happens subtly under the disguise of goodness, many of us are in danger of getting trapped into something which the Catholic Church does not uphold as truth.

And no wonder! Even Satan disguises Himself as an angel of light. – 2Cor 11:14

“It is said that many confess and few are converted. I believe it is so, because few confess with tears of repentance.” – St. John Vianney

Learning from Mistakes

Many of us, perhaps as children, have been taught and encouraged to go for the Sacrament of Confession. Unfortunately, '*WHY and HOW*' this Sacrament should be approached may not have been taught effectively. Parents, teachers and others in authority have fallen short of this responsibility in many ways. The damaging consequence is that people lose out on a spiritual blessing due to their ignorance of how the Sacramental graces could flow into their lives.

However, the damage can be rectified by the grace of God and our co-operation. All adult Catholics have a moral responsibility to understand their faith to deeper levels, to make attempts to educate themselves along with prayer and to learn more about all the spiritual activities they partake in. This makes the activity one which is pleasing to God and one which bears true fruit of Christ's kingdom on earth!

Signs of True Repentance

1. **Prayer:** True repentance is always accompanied by some sort of prayer, both before & after Confession.

If my people humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will forgive their sin and heal their land. – 2Chr 7:14

2. **Inner change:** True ongoing repentance will result in an inner transformation over time. The word ‘repent’ in the Bible is “metanoia” which means ‘to change one’s way of life’. A continual spiritual conversion of heart is very important.

Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of God. – Matt 18:3

3. **The Cross:** True repentance has to be understood in connection to the Cross of Jesus and His suffering. Jesus shed His blood to take away our sins (1Jn 2:2), so we should not forget this during Confession.

Without the shedding of Blood, there is NO forgiveness of sins. – Heb 9:22

REPENTANCE is a *MUST* for one to be in communion with God. Jesus tells us to either *‘repent or perish’* (Lk 13:5). No amount of good and charitable work, giving to the poor, ministry or service of any kind can take the place of personal repentance (Joel 2:13, Ps 51:16-17).

Without repentance, self-righteousness seeps in, which is damaging to us and to others and also pulls down the Kingdom of God.

Giving our hearts to Jesus and desiring to have an inner transformation (metanoia) in our lives is a core aspect of being a Christian disciple.

A *‘cleansing’* and *‘returning’* to God in a pro-active manner cannot be skipped out if one has to experience the closeness and the love of God (Jam 4:8) and in turn, receive salvation.

Conclusion

Sincere Repentance is the KEY to Forgiveness

The Sacrament of Confession has to be approached with this in mind. If not, it will amount to a misuse of God's gift of Reconciliation which the Catholic Church offers. It amounts to taking God lightly, being a bad witness in society, and it also indirectly and silently discourages other Catholics from reaping the benefits of this spiritual treasure. This is because we are all a part of the Body of Christ and not isolated or separate beings. What we do and what we do not do, in addition to how we do it, affects the wider community, whether we realise it or not. To be partakers in causing this damage to God's kingdom is contrary to our call to be partakers of divine nature (2Pet 1:4).

"To him who still remains in this world, there is no repentance that is too late." – St. Cyprian

Repent, and believe in the good news.

– Mk 1:15

***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has
come near.*** – Matt 4:17

These are the first words of Jesus which he spoke after he came out of the 40 days in the wilderness. These words need to be imprinted on our hearts and seen in our behaviour, allowing for a truly grace filled and empowering relationship with the Lord, as Jesus desires for one and all!

Prayer from Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O Lord. Cleanse me from my sin. I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and renew a right spirit within me!

More Quotes from Catholic Saints

Let not even the weak and the very sinful fear to approach me. Even if their sins be as numerous as all the sand of the earth, all will be forgiven in the fathomless pit of my mercy.

– **Jesus to St. Faustina (Dairy, 1059)**

God does not judge Christians because they sinned, but because they do not repent.

– **St. Niphon of Constantia**

Be ashamed when you sin, not when you repent. Sin is the wound, repentance is the medicine.

– **St. John Chrysostom**

Years are not needed for true repentance and not days, but only an instant.

– **St. Ambrose of Optina**

To repent is not to look downwards at my own shortcomings, but upwards at God's love, it is not to look backwards with self-reproach but forward with trustfulness, it is to see not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I might yet become.

– **St. John Climacus**

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DIRECTION FOR A BETTER CONFESSION

This booklet throws light on the necessity of Repentance in Confession which sadly, is many a time put aside and downplayed.

Included are a few pointers to experience the immense joy of being forgiven by God, and some direction by a few Catholic saints.

Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus. – Acts 3:19-20

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