

What can I do?

If you have never made your confession before or perhaps it has been some time since you last made one; think and pray about making your confession. You could speak to your parish priest about this or go to church at the time advertised for confessions. The priest will be able to guide you through the process. You might like to prepare by thinking about and writing down the ways you have sinned. This guide might help:

Against God: not going to church; not making your communion; not giving time for prayer and reading the Bible; blaspheming God's name; ignoring God; not giving generously to church and charity

Against your neighbour: anger; jealousy; acts of violence; unfaithfulness; prejudice; disregard for the environment.

Against yourself: gluttony; addiction; pride; self-loathing; laziness; living beyond your means; not using your talents.

Remember the Sacrament is not about being judged but rather an opportunity to experience God's love and to be reconciled with Him.

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What Jesus did on earth he still does through his seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Each of these sacraments enable us to have a personal encounter with Jesus our risen Lord. The sacraments are God's gifts to equip us to lead a full and holy life.



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

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 **The Church Union**

A Prayer

My God, for love of you I desire to hate and forsake all sins by which I have ever displeased you; and I resolve by the help of your grace to commit them no more; and to avoid all opportunities of sin. Help me to do this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If any man confess his secret and hidden sins to the Minister, for the unburdening of his conscience, and to receive spiritual consolation and ease of mind from him; we...do straitly charge and admonish him, that he do not at any time reveal and make known to any person whatsoever the crime or offence so committed to his trust and secrecy...under pain of irregularity. – The Canons of the Church of England

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

A first confession may be an occasion of vivid realization of the Cross and a decisive turning-point in spiritual depth. Michael Ramsey – The Christian Priest Today

What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is often called the Sacrament of Confession. It is a way in which we can confess our sins (those things we have done which separate us from God, our neighbour and the Church) to God out loud, and then through the ministry of the priest can hear that God forgives us and loves us. Whilst making your confession can seem daunting it is a gift from God as it allows us to be reconciled to Him and to know fully His love for us. Remember, whatever you tell the priest in this Sacrament can never, under any circumstance be repeated by him. This is called the Seal of the Confessional. What the priest will do is give you advice and counsel, as well as a penance to say. The penance (normally a prayer or reading) is a way to show God that you are truly sorry and will try to do better. This is followed by the absolution, the moment your sins are forgiven. At its core this Sacrament helps us to understand and know God's perfect love.



Outward Sign

To receive this Sacrament you must come to a priest who will guide you through the process of making a confession. The priest will wear a purple stole as a sign of the Seal of the Confessional, that all you say cannot be repeated by him. For your part you must try to confess all of the sins that you can remember as honestly as possible. In doing so you show that you are sorry. The priest will then offer you advice and encouragement before giving you a penance to make amends with God. The most important outward sign is when the priest says the words of absolution: 'I absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. As he does this he makes the sign of the cross over you. It is at this moment your sins are forgiven and you are sent out to praise God and to grow in your Christian life.

Inward Grace

At the moment the priest says the prayer of absolution, your sins are forgiven, and you are reconciled with God; your relationship with him is restored. Our sins are forgiven and wiped away and we should not dwell upon them anymore. Spiritually our lives are restored to the moment of our Baptism, and so we should leave the sacrament full of joy and thankful for the love of God. The priest sends us out with the words 'Go in peace, the Lord has put away your sin and pray for me a sinner too'. As a result of this sacrament we are to go out into the world to share with others the love of God and are resolved to try to avoid sin.