

HOW TO CONFESS ?

A. How to confess our sins? How to make a good confession? How to make a good examination of conscience to prepare well for confession?

Since what we seek for cannot be ignored, it is very easy to make an examination of conscience.

One can be helped by a book in certain circumstances of confession, by a priest during a retreat, etc.

A grievous sin is a sin when there is a grievous matter, when one knows its fault since it is part of the essence of sin. It is science; we know that we have sinned and that we wanted it. So, we know it.

What does God expect of us?

God expects us to give him our soul, as it is, in all truth and in all sincerity.

B. What distinguishes the sacrament of penance from the others?

The sacrament of penance is unique in its kind, since in all other sacraments the matter is brought from outside: water, bread, etc.

In this sacrament, it is very special. The matter is brought by the penitent and within the penitent. The remote matter are his sins and the proximate matter is the confession he makes of them.

C. What are the different parts of the sacrament of penance?

The sacrament of penance supposes three acts of the penitent:

- The confession of his sins, for it is a court and a court that does not know the cause cannot judge. No court can afford it. We hear the accused, we hear the plaintiffs, we hear the prosecutor. Before we judge, we need a confession.

- The contrition, or at least attrition. The proper effect of the sacrament of penance is to render divine grace to one who has only attrition and not contrition. According to the formula of the Council of Trent, "*the sacrament of penance makes the one who is attrite become contrite*". He who regrets his sins by shame or fear does not do it out of love for God. Shame or fear come very easily when one has the faith. Whereas to have perfect contrition, in other words to regret having sinned only because they have offended God, is more difficult.

- The act of reparation. At the very moment when the priest gives the absolution, one must agree with the penance he proposes to you. We must be at least determined to do so. It is always possible to ask for another reparation if the one given seems impossible to offer to God.

D. Does the act of contrition have the object of formalizing the fact that one regrets one's sins?

Yes, exactly. One must have at least a regret to have offended God for obviously whatever reason. And it is good to tell this regret.

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven, and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

E. When the priest gives the absolution, does he act in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ or as identifying himself with our Lord as it is in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist?

That is the whole question about priesthood. The priest participates in the grace of union of our Lord Jesus Christ. It means that he is physically part of the mystery of Incarnation. He participates not only in the capital grace or in the sanctifying grace of Christ, but also in the grace of union through which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Priest. The grace of union is the favor given to the man Jesus Christ to subsist in the person of the Word of God, or more precisely the Verb of God. It is this infinite, limitless grace that makes him a priest participating in the Priesthood of our Lord.

In the priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, eternal Priest is present as such. A priest participates in the Priesthood of the only Priest, Who is the Lord. In the sacrament of penance, the priest takes the place of our Lord, He is the Priest. He does not say, “*Christ forgives you for your sins,*” but “*I forgive you*”.

F. Who has this power to forgive sins?

God has it, our Lord Jesus Christ has it because He is God and man at the same time and He has given this power to His priests who thus participate in this grace of union of Christ.

G. So what is the right frequency to confess our sins?

- The confession is required once a year, as it is a commandment of the Church to be able to receive worthily Holy Communion during Pascaltide.
- In the state of mortal sin, the sinner must confess his sin as quickly as possible.
- Confession helps to maintain a good level of spiritual life. For a saint, it can be very frequent. The confession once a month is a holy habit that most good Catholics should keep to fulfill properly the demands of the Sacred Heart and of our Lady of Fatima for first Fridays and first Saturdays.

A priest who forgives sins is made very happy, especially for the penitent who is forgiven. A priest is very glad because he communicates to the penitent the grace of God, he makes him meet the Holy Ghost, which is divine friendship with God. Without it man is nothing.

The priest is the channel of the Holy Ghost, our Lord gave him a divine power, “*receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*” (Jn 20:22-23).

H. Conclusion

Confession begins in the love of God, is realized in the love of God and flourishes in the love of God. When we go to confession, we need a beginning of love of God, which is not yet charity since it is the sacrament that allows the recovering of charity.

God is goodness, God is beauty, God is light, God is charity, God is mercy. And these marvelous attributes culminate for us in the infinite mercy of the sacrament of penance.