

The Sacrament of Penance



St. Joseph Catholic Church
602 S 34th St.
Tacoma, WA 98418
saintjoseph_tacoma.org



SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

Prayer before Confession

O Almighty and most merciful God, Who hast made me out of nothing, and redeemed me by the precious Blood of Thine only Son; Who hast borne with me to this day with so much patience, notwithstanding my sins and ingratitude, behold me, O Lord, prostrate at Thy feet to implore Thy forgiveness. I desire most sincerely to leave all my evil ways, to forsake this region of death where I have so long lost myself, and to return to Thee, the Fountain of life. I desire, like the prodigal child, to enter seriously into myself, and with the like resolutions to rise without delay and go home to my Father, though I am infinitely unworthy to be called His child, in hopes of meeting with the like reception from His most tender mercy. I know Thou desirest not the death of a sinner, but that he may be converted and live. I know Thy mercies are above all Thy works; and I most confidently hope, that as in Thy mercy Thou hast spared me so long, and hast now given me this desire of returning to Thee, so Thou wilt finish the work Thou hast begun, and bring me to a perfect reconciliation with Thee.

I desire now to comply with Thy holy institution of the Sacrament of Penance. I desire to confess my sins with all sincerity to Thee and to Thy minister, and therefore, I desire to know myself and to call myself to an account by a diligent examination of my conscience.

But, O my good God, what will it avail me to know my sins, if Thou dost not also give me a hearty sorrow and repentance for them? Without this, my sins will be all against me still, and I shall be still Thine enemy and a child of hell. Thou insistest upon a change of heart, without which there can be no reconciliation with Thee, and this change of heart none but Thou canst give. Oh! Give it me, then, dear Lord, at this time. Give me a lively faith and a firm hope in the Passion of my Redeemer. Teach me to fear Thee and to love Thee. Give me, for Thy mercy's sake, a hearty sorrow for having offended so good a God.

O blessed Virgin, Mother of my Redeemer, mirror of innocence and sanctity, and refuge of penitent sinners, intercede for me, through the Passion of Thy Son, that I may obtain the grace to make a good confession. O, all you blessed Angels and Saints of God, pray for me, a most miserable sinner, that I may now effectually turn from my evil ways, that my heart may henceforward be forever united with yours in eternal love, and never more go astray from the sovereign Good. Amen.

Oh, suffer me, dear Lord, to lay down all my sins at Thy feet, to be cancelled by Thy Precious Blood. Lord, Thou hast said there is joy in heaven upon one sinner's doing penance more than upon ninety-nine just. Oh, give me now grace to be a true penitent indeed, that hereby heaven may rejoice at my conversion. Thou camest, O my dear Redeemer, not to call the just, but sinners to repentance. Look down upon me, a poor miserable sinner, and draw me now powerfully to Thee by Thy grace. I know Thou wilt not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. Oh, let me no longer remain dead in my sins! Oh, let me now at least begin to live to Thee! Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit with my bowels. Oh, grant that I may now serve Thee in good earnest! Let this be the change of the right hand of the Most High. Thou hast made me, O my God, and redeemed me by Thy precious Blood. Oh, despise not the work of Thy hands, and let not Thy Blood be spilt for me in vain! Too late have I known Thee, O eternal truth! Too late have I loved Thee, O eternal beauty! Too long have I gone astray from Thee! From this moment, O my Sovereign Good, I desire to be forever Thine! Oh, let nothing in life or death ever separate Thee from me anymore! O divine lover of penitent souls, give me henceforth a contrite and humble heart. I wish from this hour to offer this sacrifice to Thee daily to the end of my life. O divine Love, how little are Thou known in this wicked world! How little are Thou loved! Come now, and take full possession of my whole heart and soul for time and eternity. Thy mercy has been infinite in bearing so long with so ungrateful a sinner as I have been, and in daily heaping Thy favors upon me. Add this one favor, O lord, to all the rest, that henceforth, through Thy grace, I may never offend Thee more. This one thing I earnestly beg of Thee, for Thine infinite mercy's sake and through the death and Passion of Thine only Son. Hear this one prayer, I beseech Thee, and in all things else do with me what Thou pleasest. I am resolved, by Thy grace, never more to turn to my sins. Oh, rather let me die than offend Thee willfully anymore. I am resolved to avoid all evil company and dangerous occasions, and to take proper measures for a through amendment of my life for the future. All this I resolve; but Thou knowest my frailty, O my God: and if Thou assist me not with Thy grace, all my resolutions will prove ineffectual, and I shall be forever miserable. Oh, Look! to me, O Lord, that I may never betray Thee anymore.

The Seven Capital Sins

Pride, Lust, Anger, Covetousness, Envy, Sloth, Gluttony.

AFTER THE EXAMINATION

Having discovered the different sorts of sins of which you have been guilty, together with their number, enormity, or such circumstances as may considerably increase their malice, or change their nature, you should endeavor to excite in your breast a *heartfelt sorrow* for having committed them, and a sincere detestation of them. This being the most essential, as well as the most difficult, of all the dispositions requisite for a good confession, with what humility, fervor, and perseverance should you not importune Him Who holds the hearts of men in His hands to grant it to you.

AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS BEFORE CONFESSION

My Lord and my All! I am confounded at the multitude and enormity of my offenses against so good a God. Alas! What shall I now do, O Lord? What shall I say? With the humble publican, I will strike my breast, and cry unto Thee, *O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.* My sins exceed in number the sands of the sea. But Thy mercies are still greater in number than my sins. O ocean of mercy! Have compassion on me, a poor sinner, and make me, now at least, a true penitent. Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am not worthy to be called Thy child. O receive me as one of the least of Thy servants, and never suffer me to stray from Thee again. It grieves me, O my God, that I have offended Thee. I am heartily sorry for all the sins I have committed against Thine infinite goodness. Oh, that I could sufficiently lament them, even with tears of blood! Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that, night and day, I may bewail all my sins and my ingratitude? Oh, that I had never offended my God! Oh, that I had never sinned! Happy those souls who have never lost their baptismal innocence! Ah! Sweet Jesus, that I had been so happy! Oh, that I could now, like Magdalen, prostrate myself at the feet of my Savior! Oh, that I could wash them with my tears.

EXAMINATION ON CONSCIENCE

Begin by examining yourself on your last confession and Communion.

Whether a grievous sin was forgotten through want of proper examination; concealed or disguised through shame. Whether you confessed without a true sorrow, a firm purpose of amendment and of repairing the evil done to your neighbor.

See whether you received Holy Communion without devotion, or neglected to offer a proper thanksgiving. Whether the penance was performed without voluntary distractions. Whether you have neglected your confessor's counsel, and fallen at once into habitual sins. Whether you have renounced all affection to mortal sin, or remained long in sin without eliciting acts of contrition and returning to confession. Then examine yourself on the ten Commandments; the Commandments of the Church; the Seven Capital Sins; the duties of your state in life; and your ruling passion. Calmly recollect the different occasions of sin which have fallen in your way, or to which your state and condition in life expose you; the places you have frequented; the persons you have associated with, etc. Do not neglect to consider the circumstances which alter the grievousness of the sin, nor the various ways in which we become accessory to the sins of others. The following short table will help you in your examination.

The Commandments of God

1. Have you doubted in matters of faith? – Murmured against God at your adversity or at the prosperity of others? – Despaired of His mercy? – Believed in fortune-tellers or consulted them? – Gone to places of worship belonging to other denominations? – Not recommended yourself daily to God?
2. Taken the name of God in vain? – Spoken irreverently of holy things, or profaned anything relating to religion? – Sworn falsely, rashly, or in slight and trivial matters? – Cursed yourself, or others, or any creature? – Angered others so far as to make them swear, or blaspheme God
3. Have you kept holy the Lord's Day, and all other days commanded to be kept holy? – Bought or sold things, not of necessity, on that day? – Done or commanded some servile work not of necessity? – Missed Mass or been willfully distracted during Mass? – Talked, gazed, or laughed in church? – Profaned the day by dancing, drinking, gambling, etc?

4. Have you honored your parents, superiors, according to your just duty? – Deceived them, disobeyed them? – Failed in due reverence to aged persons?
5. Procured, desired, or hastened the death of anyone? – Borne hatred; oppressed anyone; desired revenge; not forgiven; refused to speak to others; used provoking language; threatened or struck others not under your charge; made others fall out?
6. Have you been guilty of lascivious dressing or make-up; lewd company; have you read immodest books; been guilty of unchaste songs, discourses, words, looks, or actions with yourself or others? – Willfully entertained impure thoughts and desires?
7. Stealing; deceit in gaming, reckoning, buying or selling, in wares, prices, weights or measures; bought of such as could not sell; willfully damaged another man's goods, or negligently spoiled them; run into debt carelessly, beyond your power of payment?
8. Borne false witness, called injurious names; revealed another's sins; flattered yourself or others; opened the letters of others; judged rashly; falsely suspected?
9. See no.6.
10. Coveted unjustly anything that belonged to another?

The Precepts of the Church

Have you gone to confession at least once a year? – Received Holy Communion during Eastertide?

Have you violated the fasts of the Church, or eaten flesh-meat on prohibited days?