

CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (FIRST FORM)

1. Preparation

As you prepare to celebrate the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*, remember...

Nothing can keep us from God's loving mercy and forgiveness.

Pope Francis wrote,

“I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy which spurs us on to do our best. A small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties. Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.”
(*Evangelii Gaudium*, 44)

The spirit of Pope Francis’ words will shape the experience you are about to have in your encounter with God’s loving mercy and forgiveness.

As you think about what you are going to say in the Sacrament, there is no need to enumerate *a list* of what you judge or consider to be your sins. It is not a memory test or an exam. And if it’s been a long time—or you are unfamiliar with what to do or say, this sheet will guide you and the celebrant will kindly accompany you through the celebration. As you prepare, you might like to express where you believe in your life you have compromised your baptismal commitment in thought, word or deed. These questions might guide your spiritual preparation:

- What is it in your life that you are seeking reconciliation with God and the Community of the Church?
- For what are you seeking God’s forgiveness?

2. The Celebration

- As you enter the Reconciliation Room you will have a choice of remaining anonymous behind the physical screen that separates you from the celebrant OR you might like to move through the curtains to sit down across a small table from the celebrant.
- The celebration begins with a *Sign of the Cross*, as the celebrant welcomes you to this moment and offers a prayer of blessing and encouragement as you come before God to confess your sins.
- The celebrant will read a short Scripture passage relevant to this sacred moment, and then invite you to share what you would like to say.

- Share what you think lies at the heart of what you want to say about your relationship with God and others. This expresses where you desire true reconciliation and inner peace.
- The celebrant may offer some reflection in dialogue with what you have talked about. The heart of the Sacrament is about *Reconciliation*. There is where the emphasis lays, not on confession or ensuring that you have remembered everything you wanted to say. In other words, where do you want to be reconciled in your life with yourself, others, the world and God?
- The celebrant suggests a penance, that is, an action (in word or deed) that externalises your desire for reconciliation and your sincerity to live out authentically your baptismal commitment.
- The celebrant next invites you to offer a *Prayer of Sorrow* (sometimes called an “Act of Contrition”). This prayer can take several forms:
 - ❖ You might like to speak a prayer of sorrow as it arises from your heart, acknowledging your sinfulness and your desire for God’s forgiveness.
 - ❖ You might like to pray a prayer that you have memorised or know well.
 - ❖ You might like to pray something like one of the following:
 - “O God, I am very sorry for my sins. I seek your forgiveness as I try not to sin again. I pray this with Jesus my brother. Amen”
 - “O God, I come before you and I acknowledge my sinfulness. You see me as I am. I know you love me and want my happiness. Please forgive me as I seek to be faithful to my baptismal commitment. I ask this through Jesus my brother. Amen”
 - “Loving God, I thank you for being with me and bringing me to this moment of reconciliation. Forgive my sins and offer me the strength to live faithful to my baptismal commitment, through Jesus my brother. Amen”
- The celebrant then prays the prayer of Absolution over you. The words of the prayer are completed with “...and I absolve you from all your sins, **+** in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” To which you respond “**Amen.**” A final prayer may follow.
- At the conclusion of the celebration the priest invites you to go in peace.

3. Afterwards

After you leave the Reconciliation Room, spend some time in conversation with God, reflecting in gratitude on your experience of the Sacrament, and articulating your desire to continue to live out faithfully your baptismal commitment as a disciple of Jesus through the act of penance suggested.

PLEASE LEAVE THIS SHEET IN THE CHURCH
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