

Catholic 101

How To Go To Confession

by Fr. Larry Rice, CSP

During the season of Lent, many Catholics will want to seek out the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or confession. In my experience as a confessor, I often encounter people who aren't comfortable, or who don't quite remember how Reconciliation works. So here are Fr. Larry's tips for a good confession.

1. Know what it is you want to confess. Spend some time reflecting on your life, and examine your conscience so you know why you need God's forgiveness.
2. Find a confessor you're comfortable with. If you want more anonymity that you think you'll get with a priest at your own parish, go to a neighboring parish. Lots of people do.
3. If you have lots to say, or if you will want more than a five minute conversation, don't just get in line on a Saturday afternoon. Call a priest and make an appointment. It's better if you don't feel rushed.
4. Relax. If it's been a while, or if you're nervous, or you don't remember how to proceed, just tell the priest. He'll reassure you, and walk you through the process.
5. "I don't remember the Act of Contrition." Not to worry. After you receive your penance, and before the prayer of absolution, you need to pray an Act of Contrition. If you don't have one memorized, you can say a prayer in your own words telling God you're sorry for your sins, and that with his help you'll try to do better.
6. Go regularly. Many people find it helpful to see the same confessor every few weeks. With regular confessions, particularly face-to-face, your confessor can help you look at the patterns of your life, not just individual sins.

Lent is a season of repentance for the whole Church. With a little preparation and clear communication, the Sacrament of Reconciliation can make that repentance a real force for healing in your life.

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