

FROM THE CHAPLAINCY



Dear Woodrose Parents

Pope Francis going to confession during a penitential rite at St. Peter's Basilica.

Two weeks ago, the sign of the cross was traced on our foreheads with the ashes from the burnt blessed palms of Palm Sunday. It was Ash Wednesday, the start of the Lenten season. In his homily, Pope Francis said that the season of Lent is a favorable time to remedy the dissonant chords of our Christian life and to receive the ever new, joyful and hope-filled proclamation of the Lord's Passover. It is a 40-day season of conversion and renewal, of grace and blessing.

In his beautiful article ***Why You Should Go to Confession This Lent*** published in Catholic Exchange, Fr. William Casey explained why it is important to go to Confession during the Lenten season. Here are nine points from that article:

1. PREPARE OUR HEARTS Lent is the time of year when God obligates us to prepare our hearts and to purify our souls so that we are ready to receive Our Lord in His glorious coming at Easter. There's no time to delay. The Bible says, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

2. EXAMINE OUR CONSCIENCE To make a good confession, we should start by examining our conscience conscientiously, asking ourselves some really hard questions like: *Is there something I can do to get closer to God? Is there something I can do to know God better and to love Him more? Is there some way I can increase my desire for prayer? Is there some way I can rekindle that fire of divine love that might have*

gone out in my life? Is there some way I can rid myself of the spiritual mediocrity, the spiritual indifference that I find myself in so much of the time? Is there something I can give up? Is there something in my life right now that is not pleasing to Almighty God? Is there some sin that I am holding on to? Is there some habitual sin that is separating my heart from God's loving grace? Is there something I need to confess? Am I crucifying Our Lord all over again by living in my sins? Here is a link for a more detailed examination of conscience: <https://www.ewtn.com/library/prayer/examconscience.html>

"Lord, let there be less of me and more of You. Let me say no to my will and yes to Yours."



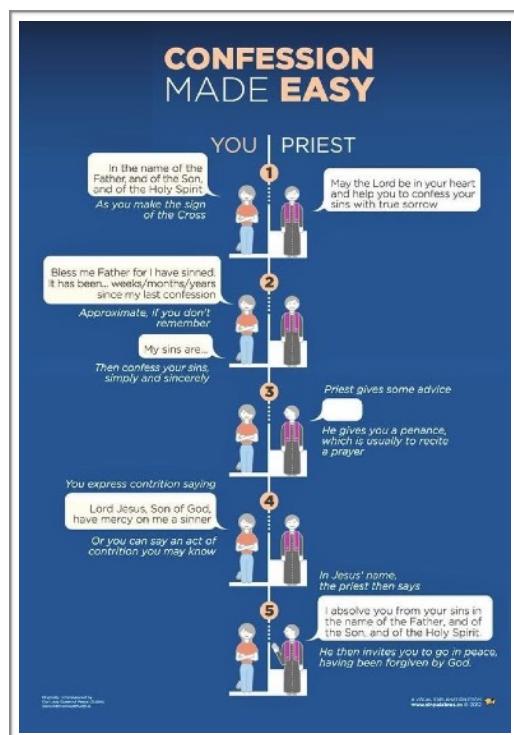
A stained glass window illustrating the sacrament of Confession.

3. PRAY Fr. Casey suggests that we should pray everyday using a more personal prayer like: *Lord, let there be less of me and more of You. Let me say no to my will and yes to Yours. God, give me the grace to love You more today than yesterday and more tomorrow than today.* Here is a link to some more prayer before and after confession: www.ourcatholicprayers.com/prayers-before-confession.html

4. GO TO CONFESSION Confession gives us the opportunity to right what has gone wrong in our lives. The Fatima seer St. Jacinta spoke this challenging truth: *"If men only knew what eternity is, how they would make all possible efforts to amend their lives."* With this in mind, let us explore the special grace God gives us in the sacrament of Confession to help us on that journey of sanctification.

5. BE WATCHFUL Our Lord warned us throughout the Gospel to be watchful. We must be on our guard, and that means keeping our souls in the state of grace, because we can never know the day or the hour when He will come. To help us to do that, God has given us the great gift of His Mercy in the Sacrament of Penance. It is the ordinary means for the forgiveness of mortal sins committed after Baptism. It is also a treasure of graces and spiritual strength for us in our daily struggle against sin and temptation.

6. SIN IS REAL Pope Pius XII said many times that the great sin of our age is, in fact, the denial of sin. The only one thing that can separate us from God is mortal sin. To conceal the reality of sin is to play the devil's game, to fall into his trap. Most people today see enjoyment of this life as being more important than eternity. We don't want to hear the truth because the truth makes us feel uncomfortable — because the truth sometimes demands that we change our lives, our minds, and our hearts toward God and toward others.



7. REPENT When Jesus called the twelve Apostles and began to send them out to preach, He gave them authority and the power to bring healing to every kind of human suffering but the most important mission that Christ gave the Apostles was to preach the need for repentance. Jesus' first words when He began His public ministry were, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt. 4:17). No one can be a disciple of Christ, or even claim the name "Christian," unless that person is willing to repent.

To repent means to recognize the reality of personal sin in

your life — and to turn away from it. It means putting sin out of your life and changing your life according to God's Will, even when God's Will doesn't conform to your opinions. It means to seek the loving mercy of God with a spirit of true contrition which includes sorrow for sin you've committed, hatred for those sins and all sin, and a firm purpose of amendment, which means that you intend to try, with the help of God's grace, not to commit the same sins in the future. To repent also means to accept God's word and God's law and to make it your way of life. It means putting faith into action. To repent means to do penance. God expects us to make reparation for the harm caused by our sins against Him and against our neighbors.

All of us feel the attractive power of sin in our lives. All of us have to struggle to control our disordered passions. There's always the danger that we can give in to temptation and fall into mortal sin in a moment of weakness. Therefore, there's an ongoing need for repentance in our lives.

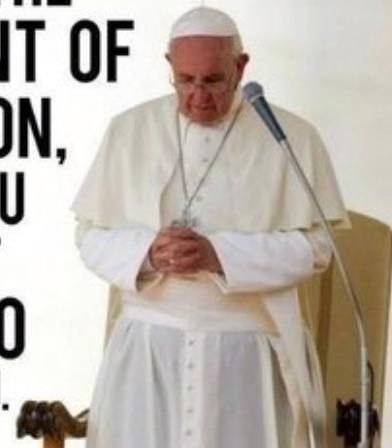
8. GOD FORGIVES This is why Our Lord gave us the Sacrament of Penance! He gave it to us on that first Easter Sunday, when He appeared to the Apostles in the Upper Room after His Resurrection, a critical moment in the history of the Church. We are told about this in the Gospel of St. John: "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' " (John 20:22–23).

Jesus left us this sacrament because He knew well what sin and guilt can do to the human soul. They can tear the human soul apart — separate it from God. They can drive a person to despair. God knows we need to have some way to be free of sin and guilt because they can rob us of the inner peace and joy that should be ours as Christian believers — the peace and joy that come with having a clear conscience before God.

The human spirit needs to be at peace with God, and we need to be at peace with ourselves. We need to know for sure that God has forgiven us. We need to be able to experience God's merciful love as it touches our lives. There will be times in our lives, we know well, when we will need to make a new start spiritually, when we will need to wipe the slate clean and start over again. When we do this, we will need to be strengthened by God's grace to avoid the same sins in the future. That is how the sacrament of Confession helps to transform us interiorly.

**DON'T BE AFRAID
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Pope Francis



9. **GOD'S MERCY** The beauty of the sacrament of Penance is that whenever you confess your sins to the best of your ability and the best of your memory — when you don't hold anything back and you are truly sorry and you have a firm purpose of amendment — you always leave the confessional with that confident assurance of God's complete forgiveness.

When you've made a good Confession, all your sins are forgiven, so long as you have a contrite heart. God sees the interior of the heart. And if later you should remember some sin that you have forgotten to confess, just bring it up in your next Confession. It's as simple as that.

It is because of God's infinite love for us that He commands us to make use the sacrament of Penance. It is in this sacrament that we release the past to God's mercy, the present to His love, and the future to His providence.

