

GENERAL CONFESSION

WHY IS CONFESSION NECESSARY?:

Non-Catholics, and even many Catholics, often ask whether they can confess their sins directly to God, and whether God can forgive them without going through a priest. On the most basic level, of course, the answer is yes, and Catholics should make frequent [acts of contrition](#), which are prayers in which we tell God that we are sorry for our sins and ask for His forgiveness.

But the question misses the point of the Sacrament of Confession. The sacrament, by its very nature, confers graces that help us to live a Christian life, which is why the Church requires us to receive it at least once per year. Moreover, it was instituted by Christ as the proper form for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, we should not only be willing to receive the sacrament, but we should embrace it as a gift from a loving God.

It is not difficult to understand the value in the Church ministry of divine mercy for the salvation of souls. That ministry of many confessors who, with their spiritual insight, helped penitents to understand that the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and a Christian life that aspires to holiness are inseparable elements of the same spiritual process for every baptized person. May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy and of Hope, help all confessors to carry out zealously and joyfully this great service on which the Church's life so intensely depends.

General confession is a very important tool in starting a new chapter in life.

For example, when one chapter ends, and another begins, after graduation and before starting a new job, before wedding anniversaries (5,25 etc). When marital problems arise, when sins that had been already confessed and received absolution, all of a sudden come back to our thoughts, before surgery or when our life fails and it seems that nothing makes any sense.

General confession is a very complex issue. More and more believers have a strong need to confess in this way.

Most often general confession is recommended for engaged couples. They face life together and it is strongly suggested that they leave behind the sins of their past. Their marriage should not begin with sin. The general confession of engaged couples should not be performed in a hurry, right before the wedding.

This is why it is recommended to first do general “whole life” confession when they come to arrange their Wedding; and then second one, before the wedding.

People considering entering a seminary or convent should also get rid of the sins of their past lives.

In some monasteries it is manifested by adopting a new name. Some patients decide to have a general confession before a serious surgery.

The person who decides to have a general confession experiences great solace and peace of mind and soul. To repeat after St Augustine: “Our hearts are restless, until they rest in Thee”.

It is recommended to have a general confession every 10 years. It could be done during a parish retreat, before sacrament of marriage, or because there is need of some more serious, personal conversion. This type of confession is very often done by those who sense that they are near death. They may especially feel the need of confessing their sins in that way.

During general confessions one is mostly saying grave sins. But it would not be invalid if penitent would confess venial sins (in case he has not committed any grave sins). General confession is complimentary to all other confessions that one may have. It is of a high importance and every confessor should take it seriously. For some people it is the only means of salvation, for others it is a source of immeasurable graces.

The general confession is necessary if:

1. Someone lied during previous confessions, altered the circumstances of their sins or omitted mentioning the number of their sins. Due to lack of good will he prevented obtaining absolution, if he never confessed the sacrileges.
2. When previous confessions of the penitent were not sacrilegious, but due to lack of certain conditions became invalid. It could have been: a) when penitent has had confessions without the necessary belief in the truths of faith.
3. When the penitent believed in all that God has revealed to a man and he knew the teachings of the Holy Church, then the Sacrament was valid.

4. When the examination of conscience was not performed, or performed poorly.
5. When the penitent did not show any signs of contrition, but confessed only because of habit. d) When the penitent didn't resolve to amend his life; but the confessor will know about this, when he sees that the penitent is a habitual sinner (in case of addiction) and he didn't want to fight the sin.
6. But even tried to find new confessors to conceal the addiction. That would not be the case when the sins are repeated a long time after that confession, when amends were real, and the penitent truthfully tried to follow the guidelines of the confessor. When it comes to the necessity of repeating confessions of habitual sinners, the rule might be this: when the penitent after confession tried to amend his life, fought the temptations and occasion to sin, the priest will know that the confession is valid. The opposite is true when the penitent does not get rid of the occasion of sin, or if he lives very closely with the reality of sin and does not get rid of it.
 1. When he hated his neighbor for a prolonged period of time.
 2. If he confessed to a priest that did not understand him.
 3. When a confessor, during a regular confession, discovers that previous confessions of his penitent were not valid, he may ask that the penitent will have a general confession.

To whom should we go to have a General Confession?

The best priest to obtain that type of Sacrament is someone whom you trust and he knows you really well. He will understand you and help you. The confession may last shorter than in front of a priest who does not know you at all. It is for your own benefit. This kind of confession is not to be obtained once a month, but only once in a while. Very often people resolve to have this kind of confession more often.

How should I confess during the General Confession?

Do not wait in a regular line for this type of Confession. Do not set a time limit ("Father, in 10 minutes I have to go to work"); this would not make

sense. Make an appointment with a priest. It is hard to determine how long this confession will last. If you prepare yourself well, then the confession will go faster. You can take time to prepare yourself for up to 5 days, if you need.

Make notes on paper. Start with the gravest sins, which hurt your soul the most. If you are afraid of the confession, then say it to the priest. He will comfort you.

When you confess to the same priest who knows you, you don't need to introduce yourself to him, give him your age, status etc. Just say all the problems you have, the sins, what is making you anxious.

Tell him what changed in your life for the better. Tell him your good sides too, so that the priest will have an opinion and can tell you how to change your life.

In case when priest cannot grant an absolution, he will comfort the penitent, make him feel sorry for the sins, and encourage him or her to pray more.

YOU WILL SEE!! After such confession you can breathe better and feel a definite change in your heart and soul.

Do not forget to destroy the paper with your sins, so that no one could see it.

All the best in your preparation to the General Confession!