

Come Home to God's Mercy – The Sacrament of Reconciliation



Why Do Catholics Go To Confession?

"During Lent, many parishes make a special effort to encourage Catholics to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance, also known as Reconciliation or, more popularly, Confession.

For Catholics who have not celebrated the sacrament in a while, especially those who have been away from the Church, Lent is an excellent time to be reconciled to God and to the Church.

The Gospels provide numerous examples of Jesus' mission to forgive sins. While only God can forgive sins, the Church is his instrument of forgiveness on earth.

On Pentecost Jesus shared with the Apostles his power to forgive sins: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." (Jn 20:21-23)

Today, priests and bishops continue this ministry to forgive sins.

Sins committed after Baptism are forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance.

For those who have committed mortal sin, this Sacrament is necessary to be reconciled with God and the Church.

What can a person expect when they go to confession?

- **They will be greeted by the priest, who will usually read from Scripture.**
- The person confesses their sins; the priest may offer encouragement or guidance for the person's moral and spiritual growth.**
- The priest gives a penance and asks the person to say an act of contrition. Then the priest, representing Christ, grants absolution.**

During Advent and Lent some parishes have communal penance services that precede individual confessions.

In the Diocese of Worcester, as part of the "Come Home to God's Mercy" initiative, all parishes will be offering the Sacrament of Penance every Tuesday evening in addition to the regularly scheduled times for the Sacrament.

These services remind us that sin, although personal, weakens the entire church community.

People who have been away from the sacrament may worry that they no longer know how to go to confession. In that case, they should tell the priest that it's been a while since they have received the sacrament and ask for help to make a good confession. The priest will guide them through the ritual.

Many people experience great peace and spiritual consolation after making a good confession. Their encounter with a loving, merciful God gives them renewed strength and ability to turn towards God and away from sin.