

THE *light* IS ON FOR *you*

Experience God's mercy
in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation

"God never tires of forgiving us, and through the ministry of a priest he offers us an embrace that regenerates us and allows us to continue in our journey." **Pope Francis**

"Peace be with you!" With these words, the risen Lord greeted his frightened apostles on the day of his resurrection. They were troubled, anxious and fearful — much like us at certain points in our lives. Christ repeated the words, "Peace be with you." But then he added, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them." (John 20:19-23)

The Lord Jesus was proclaiming that his crucifixion and death had made the gifts of salvation and forgiveness available to all. In the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to give us his gift of forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. Confession is such an important gift of grace that every Catholic is obliged to confess serious sins at least once a year. The church encourages more frequent confession as a means to let ourselves be healed by Christ, to grow spiritually and to progress in the life of the Spirit.

In this sacrament of mercy, we seek the grace of forgiveness and the strength to let go of patterns of behavior that prevent us from knowing, loving and serving the Lord Jesus fully. Our Holy Father Pope Francis has said of this sacrament, "When the door starts closing a bit because of our weakness and sins, confession reopens it."

Don't worry if it's been a long time since your last confession or if you are uncertain about how to approach the Lord in this sacrament. "The light is on for you." If "the door" has closed a bit for you, parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle are inviting you to let the Lord reopen it.

Jesus wants you to receive his peace, just as he wanted his apostles to receive it. Celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation this Lent and experience God's tender mercy.

**Find helpful information on confession
and search for locations and times at
www.thelightinsonseattle.org.**



What is the sacrament of penance and reconciliation?

The sacrament of penance and reconciliation is a rich source of grace. Also known as confession, it was instituted by Jesus Christ to offer us forgiveness for offenses committed against God.

Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people and God. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and his church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and his church, make reparation for what we have done and resolve to do better in the future.

The sacrament involves five elements:

- **Contrition:** We are sincerely sorry for offending God and have a firm resolve not to repeat our sins.
- **Confession:** We speak about our sins aloud to a priest.
- **Penance:** The priest prescribes an act of penance as a part of our healing.
- **Act of contrition:** We offer a prayer in which we express to God our sorrow for sin (see example below).
- **Absolution:** The priest says the words through which “God, the Father of mercies” reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the cross and grants his forgiveness.

Sample examination of conscience

I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange gods before me.

Have I treated people, events or things as more important than God?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the church or people?

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday vigil) and on holy days of obligation? On Sunday, the Lord's Day, do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship of God, joy in his day and proper relaxation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service to others?

Honor your father and your mother.

Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain or restore good communication with them when possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?

www.thelightinsonseattle.org

You shall not kill.

Have I harmed another through physical, verbal or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

You shall not commit adultery.

Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?

You shall not steal.

Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I gossiped, told lies or embellished stories at the expense of another?

You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.

Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?

How to go to confession

1. You may make your confession face-to-face or anonymously.
2. When you enter, the priest welcomes you with a blessing or greeting.
3. Make the sign of the cross and say, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was [give weeks, months or years] ago.”
4. Confess all of your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.)
5. Say, “I am sorry for these and all of my sins.”
6. The priest assigns a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.
7. Say an act of contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins.
8. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

Sample act of contrition

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

Adapted with permission from www.usccb.org/confession.