

# NO SIN TOO GREAT

**DAY OF CONFESSIONS**  
TUESDAY, MARCH 3

## THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

“Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins ...” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1422*)

It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a “confession” - acknowledgment and praise - of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man.

It is called the *sacrament of Reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: “Be reconciled to God.” He who lives by God’s merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord’s call: “Go, first be reconciled to your brother.” (CCC 1424)

### Only God forgives our sins.

#### Why to confess our sins to a priest?

Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, “The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” and exercises this divine power: “Your sins are forgiven.” Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name. (CCC1441)

In the Old Testament, we read that Moses, acted as a mediator between God and people asking for forgiveness of their sins. “If now I have found favour in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.” (NRSV Ex 34:9)

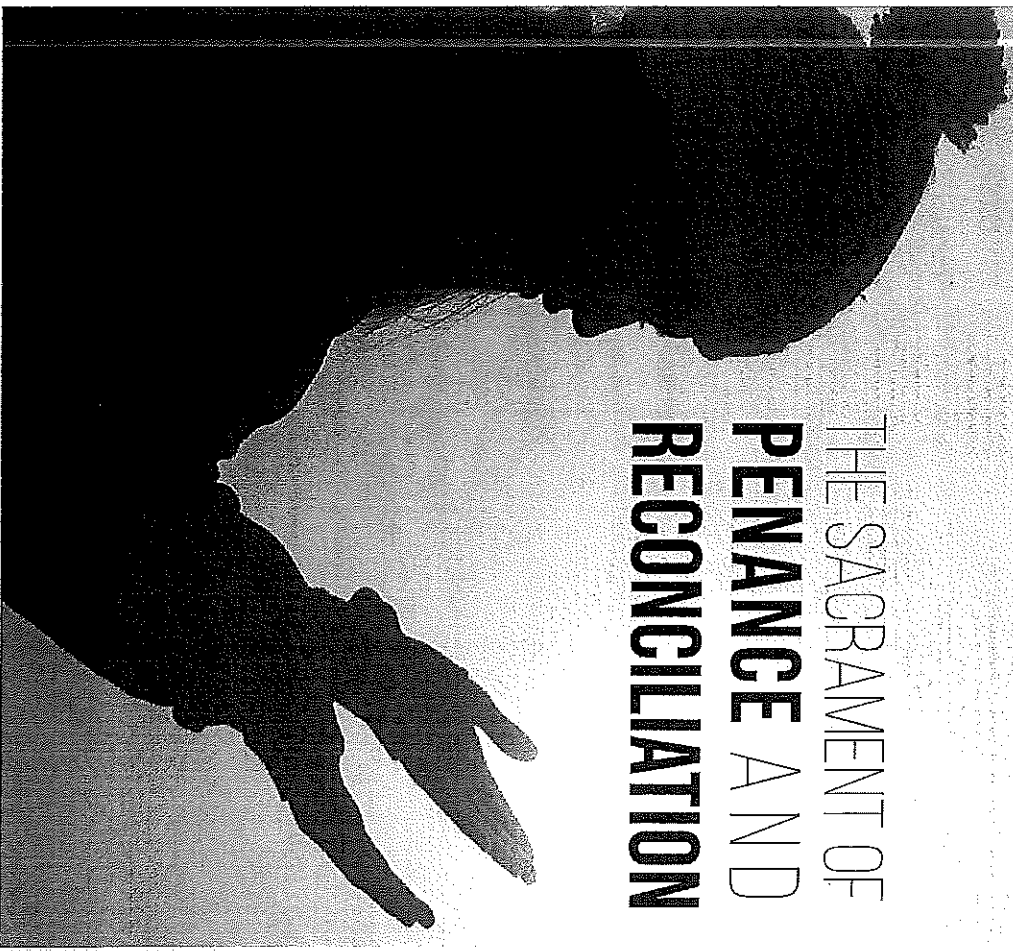
Jesus himself gave the authority to forgive sins to his apostles. He breathed upon them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’ (John 20:19-23)

### The Effects of this Sacrament

“The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship.” Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation “is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.” (CCC 1468 )

### Before the Sacrament

Be truly sorry for your sins. The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God and which is reborn with repentance. The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God’s grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.



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### Examination of Conscience

Before going to Confession you should make a review of mortal and venial sins since your last sacramental confession, and should express sorrow for sins, hatred for sins and a firm resolution not to sin again. A helpful pattern for examination of conscience is to review the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church:

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day
4. Honour your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
9. You shall not cover your neighbour's wife.
10. You shall not cover your neighbour's goods.

### Steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

If you need help — especially if you have been away for some time—simply ask the priest and he will help you by “walking” you through the steps to make a good confession.

1. The priest greets us, and we pray the Sign of the Cross. He invites us to trust in God. He may read God's Word with us.
2. We confess our sins. The priest may help and counsel us.
3. The priest gives us a penance to perform. Penance is an act of kindness or prayers to pray, or both.
4. The priest asks us to express our sorrow, usually by reciting the Act of Contrition.

### An Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. But most of all because I have offended you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

5. We receive absolution. The priest says, “I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”  
We respond, “Amen.”
6. The priest dismisses us by saying, “Go in peace.” We go forth to perform the act of penance he has given us.

### After the Sacrament

Give thanks to God for forgiving you again. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next Confession. Do your assigned Penance. Resolve to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation often.

“There is no sin that God cannot pardon.  
All we need to do is ask for forgiveness.”

- Pope Francis



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