THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The forgiveness of sins involves four parts:

- **Contrition:** a sincere sorrow for having offended God, and the most important act of the penitent.
- **Confession:** the verbal listing of our sins made in light of God's mercy. By speaking them aloud to the priest we confront our sins in a profound way.
- **Penance:** a remedy for sin and a help to the renewal of life. It is an important part of healing and reconciliation.
- **Absolution:** the remission of your sins by God who offers forgiveness and reconciliation through the words of the priest.

PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

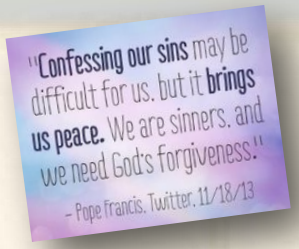
The process for receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation is not complicated but Confession requires prayerful preparation.

You should begin with prayer, placing yourself in the presence of God, always trusting in God's love and mercy. Scripture can help remind us of this gentle love (see, for example, the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15). Aware of God's desire to forgive us, review your life since your last Confession, searching your thoughts, words and actions for what did not conform to God's love, to His law or to the laws of the Church.

This is called an examination of conscience.

To make an examination of conscience:

- Begin with a prayer asking God for help.
- Review your life with the help of some questions which are based on the Ten Commandments (see next section).
- Tell God how truly sorry you are for your sins.
- Make a firm resolution not to sin again.



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Recall your sins. Prayerfully ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's and the Church's Commandments.

- Is my really heart set on God? Do I trust in God's love and mercy? Do I love God above all things and am I faithful to what He asks? Do I pray every day? Have I thanked God for the blessings given to me?
- Is my faith in God secure? Have I tried to grow in my faith and to deepen my love for God? Have I been careful to hear God's Word in scripture and in Church teaching? Am I wholehearted in accepting the Church's teaching?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse or take a false oath?
- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or on holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Did I fast and abstain on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents or lawful superiors in important matters? Was I disrespectful? Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive?
- Did I respect life? Did I recommend, advise, or actively take part in an abortion, in euthanasia or in other threats to human life?
- Did I take care of my body? Did I engage in impure conversations or actions? Did I use artificial means to prevent conception? Did I use others for my own pleasure?
- Was I unfaithful to my spouse? Did I engage in sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Did I steal or damage another's property? Have I been honest and just in my business relations?
- Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor and respected the dignity of others?
- Did I tell lies? Have I hurt others by damaging their reputation, honor, or material possessions? Did I judge others rashly?
- Have I envied other people?

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a partition between you and the priest. Choose the option that is most comfortable for you.

1. The priest greets you and may share a brief Scripture passage.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say: "Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..." (Give the number of weeks, months, or years).
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. The priest will help you to make a good confession. If you are unsure about how or what to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask the priest to help you. Answer questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, our merciful and loving Father, who wants to forgive you.
4. Following your confession, say: "I am sorry for these and all of my sins."
5. The priest will offer a penance which will help your renewal of life and your resolve to be a better Catholic.
6. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. A sample is below. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

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.

WHAT IS RECONCILIATION?

Jesus came to make the love of God known, reaching out to sinners to bring them God's forgiveness and mercy. He brought the healing love of God to earth, not only in the miracles He worked, but also in the forgiveness He bestowed on sinners, even those who had sinned publically and thought themselves beyond God's mercy.

Every time we sin, we rupture our relationship with other people, with God, and even with ourselves. Reconciliation (also known as Penance and Confession) is the way Christ gave the Church to continue bringing the healing love of God in forgiveness and mercy. In the Sacrament, we acknowledge our sins before God and His Church and look to be reconciled. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ through His Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future. The result is a renewed relationship with God and the Church and a heart strengthened to receive God's love and to do God's work.

It is understandable that you may be afraid to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation if you have been away from it for awhile or if your sin seems to be weighing you down. This sacrament, though, is more about God's mercy then about our sinfulness. Recognizing our sinfulness is only the first step in allowing God to offer forgiveness and to love us even more.

SCRIPTURAL READINGS FOR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT

- **Deuteronomy 6:3-9** - Love the Lord your God with your whole heart.
- **Sirach 28:1-7** – Forgive your neighbor when he hurts you and then your sins will be forgiven.
- **Jeremiah 7:21-26** – I will be your God, and you will be my people.
- **Joel 2:12-19** – Return to me with your whole heart.
- **Micah 6:1-4; 4-6** – Do right, love what is just, and walk humbly with your God.
- **Luke 8:9-14** – God be merciful to me a sinner.
- **John 8:1-11** – Go and sin no more.
- **Matthew 9:9-13** – I did not come to call the just, but the sinners.
- **1 John 4:16-21** – God is love, and he who lives in love, lives in God.
- **John 15:9-14** – You are my friends…
- **John 20:19-23** – Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.

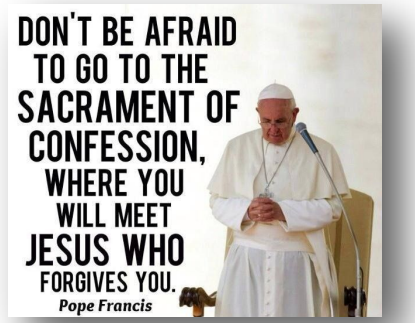
PARISH PARTNERSHIP OF ST PEREGINE

Hartstown, Huntstown/Littlepace, and Mountview/Blakestown

"Parishes Working together for Hope"

God of Mercy; People of Mercy

RECONCILIATION

A SHORT GUIDE

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the story of God's love that never turns away from us.