

19 The Sacrament of Penance

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

John 20:22–23

When you are going to do something special, you have to get ready for it. If you are going away on a trip, you don't just get in the car and ride away. First you think about the things you want to take with you. Then you find the things and pack them.

You also have to get ready before you receive the **Sacrament of Penance**. First, you should ask God the Holy Spirit to help you remember your sins. Think about what you have done wrong, and how many times you did it.

Then, try to be sorry for your sins. Think of how your sins hurt Jesus. Make up your mind not to sin again. Say an Act of Contrition, which tells God that you are sorry.

After this, it is time to receive the Sacrament. The priest will welcome you. You then make the Sign of the Cross. The priest may then read to you from the Bible.

Next you say how long it has been since your last Confession. Then you tell the priest your sins. When you have finished, say, "For these and all my sins, I am sorry." The priest will talk to you and give you a penance.

A penance is what the priest tells you to do to help you make up for the wrong you have done to God, to others, and to yourself. Sometimes the penance may be to say a few prayers or to do something for someone.

The priest may then ask you to pray an Act of Contrition. After that, he will give absolution in the name of Jesus: "I absolve you from your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." You will answer: "Amen."

The priest may then say: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good." Your answer is: "His mercy endures forever."

The Sacrament of Penance helps us to be strong and holy Christians. It keeps us in God's friendship.

We Pray:

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.
His mercy endures forever.

20 Making Up For Our Offenses

“And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.’”

Luke 19:8

One day, a big crowd of people was with Jesus. A little man named Zacchaeus went up in a tree so he could see. Jesus saw him and called out, “Zacchaeus, I would like to come to eat dinner at your house.” Zacchaeus was happy, but also sad. He knew his sins offended Jesus. So Zacchaeus told Jesus he would make up for his sins. He paid people four times the money he had taken from them.

Jesus died for us to make up for our sins. We can help to make up for our sins, too.

Once a boy was playing in his house. He was throwing a ball around, even though his mother had said not to throw balls inside. The ball hit a beautiful vase and broke it. The boy told his mother what had

happened. He said he was sorry and would never throw the ball inside again. "That's all right. I forgive you," said his mother.

But the boy wanted to make up for what he did. He picked up all the broken pieces. Then, instead of going to play, he went and picked some flowers. His mother looked so happy when he gave her the flowers. That made the boy feel glad.

How can you make up for your sins? First, you can do the penance the priest gives you when you go to Confession. Because you love God, you can do something more. You could not watch TV for one day and use that time to help your mother or father. You could play with your little brother or sister instead of your friends. It is hard to give up things you like, but it will make you strong. It will help you to say no to what is wrong.

Sometimes there is one sin that you commit more than others. It may be lying, or disobeying, or fighting with others. You should try hard to stop this bad habit, and to start a good habit. By going to Confession often, you will have the grace to stay away from sin.

Remember: the reason why you want to make up for your sins is to please Jesus. If you think of that, it will be easier to do something that is hard for you to do.

Q. 43 *What is penance?*

Penance is a prayer, offering, work of mercy, service to neighbor, act of self-denial, sacrifice, work of charity, or acceptance of our cross. It helps us to become like Jesus, and to make up for our sins (CCC 1459–60).



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