

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Questions and Answers

1. *Why is the sacrament known by different names?* It is called the sacrament of confession since confessing or telling your sins to a priest is an important part of the sacrament. It is called the sacrament of penance since it is an outward sign of a person's effort to change or conversion. It is called the sacrament of reconciliation because it helps the sinner "come back together" with God and the community.
2. *Why do we confess our sins to a priest?* Jesus entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to the apostles; as successors of the apostles priests continue to act in this ministry as official representatives of God and of the faith community.
3. *What are the actions associated with the sacrament of reconciliation?* The sacrament consists of three actions of the penitent: contrition (sorrow), confession (telling one's sins to a priest), and penance (satisfaction). The sacrament also consists of one action of the priest: absolution. The words of absolution are God's gift to sinners, assuring them of reconciliation with God and the church.
4. *How often should a Catholic go to confession?* A Catholic should confess any grave sin as defined by the Ten Commandments at least once a year. Also, frequent celebration of the sacrament is a very useful remedy for lesser sins. Because the sacrament is so helpful in our spiritual and moral growth, it is recommended that we go to confession once a month.
5. *Can a priest repeat the contents of a confession?* The priest is the servant of the sacrament, not the master of it. He has taken a vow never to reveal the contents of a private confession. This is known in the church as the "seal of confession."

Other Questions: