

ORDER FOR MAKING AN ACT OF CONTRITION FOR WHEN THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE CANNOT BE CELEBRATED

The ordinary means of receiving God's grace for the forgiveness of sins is through the SACRAMENT OF PENANCE. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave this sacrament to the Church for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, entrusting the power of forgiving sins to the bishops and priests of the Church who share in the apostolic ministry (John 20.22-23). For the forgiveness of sins the following are required:

- 1. Contrition, or sorrow for sin. This will mean that we must first find out what our sins are, by careful self-examination. When we know what our sins are, we must have true repentance for having offended God's goodness, and broken his commandments.*
- 2. Confession, or owning up to our sins. We make our confession to the priest as the minister of God, and as the representative of the Church.*
- 3. Absolution, or God's forgiveness. By it, God washes away the stain of sin from our souls, and gives us strength to resist sin in the future.*
- 4. Satisfaction. This includes doing the penance that the priest gives to us as a sign that we will do our best to follow God's holy will in the future, resolving not to commit sins again, by the help of God's grace, and restoring (if it is possible) anything of which we have defrauded anyone else.*

At this time, the Sacrament of Penance cannot be celebrated, and so the faithful are encouraged to recover the grace they have lost through sin by practising an EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE and making a perfect ACT OF CONTRITION, in which they resolve to avail themselves of the Sacrament at the earliest opportunity.

By completing this Act of Contrition in a perfect manner, that is, out of love for God and what he has done for you in Christ, you will receive forgiveness of both mortal and venial sins, provided that you determine to correct your life and make a firm resolution to go to the Sacrament of Penance as soon as possible, when it once more becomes available.

Kneeling or sitting before a crucifix or image of the crucified Christ (or using this image if you have no other available), sign yourself with the SIGN OF THE CROSS saying:

+ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

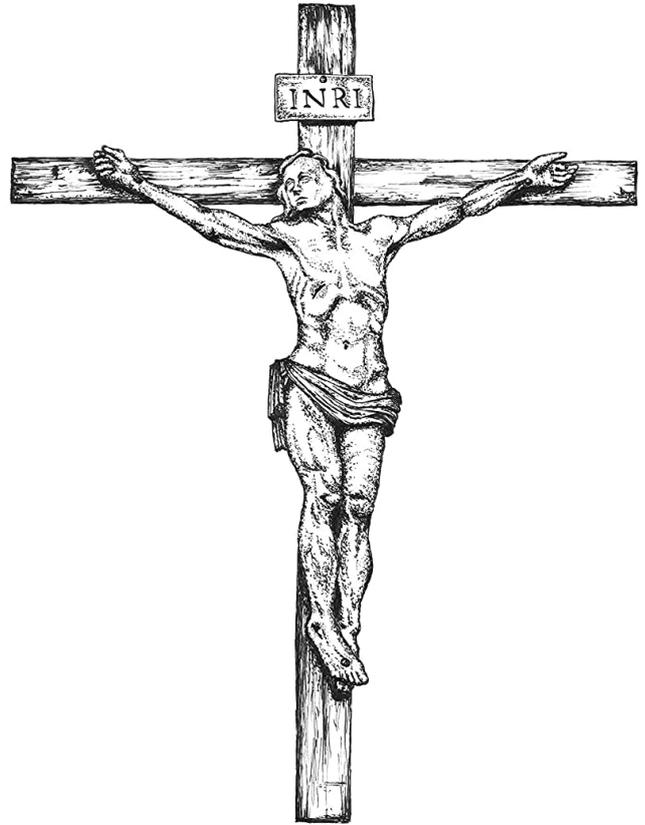
Make an EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE saying:

Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, but now I come to seek your pardon. I thank you for giving me time for repentance and for the hope of forgiveness through the precious death of your dear Son.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the Cross that all mankind should be saved, set your death and passion between your judgment and my soul, now and at the hour of my death.

O Holy Spirit, give me grace to know my sins, and courage to acknowledge them. Grant that I may know what my life is like in your sight. Let me not be ignorant of my sins through blindness, nor careless of them through hardness of heart. Show me where I have offended you, and how I should amend my life.

Now try to remember what sins you have committed, against God, your neighbour, and yourself, since your last confession. To do this, you may wish to reflect on the Ten Commandments or the Precepts of the Church (printed below), or look up the Beatitudes (Matthew 5.1-12), or St Paul's writings about love (I Corinthians 13) or the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5).



Contrition is 'sincere sorrow for having offended God, and hatred for the sins we have committed'. It is 'imperfect' when we are sorrowful out of fear of God's judgment and punishment, but it is 'perfect' when we repent of our sins because we love God and we sincerely regret having offended him and having contributed to Christ's sufferings on the Cross.

Perfect contrition is explained to us by St John Chrysostom (Homily VII, on II Timothy 3,1-7): 'As a fire which has taken possession of a forest, cleans it out thoroughly, so the fire of love, wheresoever it falls, takes away and blots out everything that could injure the divine seed, and purges the earth for the reception of that seed. Where love is, there all evils are taken away.'

Our contrition therefore needs to be perfect in order to receive the forgiveness of mortal and venial sins. To help you in this, look at the crucifix again, meditate on the fact that Jesus died for you, and then say:

Jesus, my God and my Saviour, in the midst of your agony you remembered me, you suffered for me, you wished to purify me from my sins.

Now recite the following ACT OF CONTRITION, slowly and with meaning:

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 they offend 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.

Finally, make a firm resolution to go to the Sacrament of Penance as soon as practically possible. (This is an essential component in order to obtain forgiveness of sins.) Then end your prayer saying:

+ In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20.1-17)

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

“You shall not kill.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour’s.”

PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

1. To attend Mass on Sundays and holy days while resting from servile labour.
2. To receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.
3. To receive the Eucharist at least once a year, during the Easter Season.
4. To observe the days of fasting and abstinence.
5. To help to provide for the needs of the Church according to one's abilities.

Our thanks to Fr Christopher Johnson, Parish Priest of St Peter Horbury, for allowing us to reproduce this Act of Contrition

THE PARISH OF ST PETER & ST LEONARD, HORBURY,
with ST JOHN, HORBURY BRIDGE

