**Jesus Christ came into the world to save all people from the power of Satan, sin, and sin's consequence. To reconcile us with God. In a special way, his death on the cross brought the possibility of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation to all.**

On the evening of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to his Apostles and gave them the power to forgive all human sins. Breathing upon them, He said: "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained*."(Jn.20: 22-23). Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, bishops and priests of the Church receive the ability from Christ himself to forgive sins. It is exercised in the *Sacrament of Reconciliation* (known also as the Sacrament of Penance or simply 'confession."). Through this Sacrament, Christ forgives the sins that members of his Church commit after baptism.

When you come to church to confess your sins, you should first examine your conscience. Review your life to see how you offended God since your last confession. The Church teaches that all mortal sins committed after Baptism must be confessed to a priest in order to be forgiven (*see 'mortal sins' below*). This 'precept" (law) is of Divine Institution, meaning the confession of grave sins to a priest is part of God's plan and therefore is supported and carried-out in the life of the Church.

In order to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation worthily, the penitent (the sinner) must be sorry for his/her sins. Sorrow for sins is called 'contrition.'

* Perfect contrition is sorrow for sin motivated by the love of God;
* Imperfect contrition is sorrow for sins motivated by fear of the fires of hell or the ugliness of sin itself;

Contrition (perfect of imperfect) must include a firm purpose of amendment. That is a solid resolution to avoid the sin committed as well as the persons, places and things that prompted you to commit the sin in the first place. Without this repentance, contrition is insincere and your confession is pointless. Whenever you sin, you should beg God for the gift of perfect contrition. Often God gives this gift when a Christian thinks about Jesus' agony on the cross and realizes that his sins are the cause of that suffering. Throw yourself into the arms of the crucified Savior's mercy and resolve to confess your sins to a priest as soon as possible. Venial Sins:

**MORTAL SIN** is a direct, conscious and free violation of one or another of the Ten Commandments in a serious matter. Mortal sin (also known as grave or deadly sin) destroys the life of grace in your soul. God's grace begins to draw the sinner back to him through sorrow from sin - brought back to life when he/she confesses their sins to a priest and receives absolution (forgiveness).ENTS

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

*( attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of obligation and keep Sunday Holy to the Lord and a day of rest)*

4. Honor 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 neighbor;
9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife;
10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

**VENIAL SINS** are violations of God's law that do not sever the relationship with him or destroy the life of grace in the soul. The Church recommends that Catholics confess their venial sins, and encourages devotional confession, that is, the frequent confession of venial sins as a means of growing perfect in the love of God and neighbor.

If you are not sure whether or not your sins are mortal or venial, the priest whom you confess your sins to will help you to understand the difference.

Upon entering the confessional, the priest will welcome you warmly and greet you with kindness.

* Together you will make the Sign of the Cross, saying "In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen."
* The priest may then read a short passage from the Scripture;
* Begin your confession by saying "Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been...(state how long since your last confession) since my last confession, and these are my sins...;"
* Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest. Be brief and don't make excuses. Don't try to disguise or minimize what you have done. Most importantly, think of Christ crucified dying out of love for you. Put your pride aside and admit your guilt. Remember, God wills that you confess all mortal sins by name and number - be as specific as possible;
* After you confess your sins, listen to the advice the priest offers you. You may also seek his help and guidance. He will then give you a penance (either ask you to pray, fast or perform an act of charity). Through the penance, you begin to make reparation for the harm your sins have caused you, others and the Church. The penance prescribed by the priest reminds you that you need to be one with Christ in His sufferings so as to share in His resurrection;
* Finally, the priest will ask you to express your sorrow for the sins confessed in an Act of Contrition *(see below)* and then, exercising the power of Christ, he will give you absolution. As he prays over you, know with certainty of faith that God is forgiving all your sins, healing you and preparing you for the Banquet of the Kingdom of Heaven;

 ITION:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, because I dread the loss of heaven and 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, to avoid the proximate occasion of sin and never to sin anymore. Amen.

* The priest will dismiss you by saying: "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace" - to which you answer: "Thanks be to God." or "Thank-you Father"(or the priest might dismiss you with "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good" and you respond "His mercy endures forever."
* Try to spend some time in prayer, thanking God for his forgiveness. Perform the penance the priest has given you as soon as possible after receiving absolution.

If you make good use, and frequent use, of this sacrament, you will have peace of heart, purity of conscience and a deep union with Christ. The grace bestowed by this sacrament will give you greater strength to overcome sin and help you to become like Jesus, our Lord. It will make you a stronger and more committed member of His Church.

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