

Of Special Interest to Freshmen.

A great many Catholics, apparently well instructed, do not know how to go to confession. The following review of the essentials of the Sacrament of Penance is published primarily for the benefit of Freshmen, but a great many others will find it a serviceable check-up on themselves.

The Two Great Essentials.

The two great essentials without which there is no Sacrament, or the Sacrament is invalid are: 1. Contrition, and 2. Absolution.

Contrition is in the heart. It is a supernatural sorrow for sin, accompanied by a firm purpose of amendment that must extend at least to all mortal sins.

The Act of Contrition should be recited before the penitent enters the confessional, and after he has aroused sentiments of true repentance. It must be repeated in the confessional, because the priest must have an external sign of the penitent's sorrow.

The Absolution is given by the priest while the penitent recites the Act of Contrition. The penitent must wait until the priest finishes the prayer of absolution. The priest will give him a sign when it is time to leave, by saying, "Go in peace," "God bless you," "Pray for me," or some similar expression. If the penitent leaves before the priest has finished there is danger that the Absolution may not reach him, as physical presence may be interrupted.

The Accessories.

The following accessories usually accompany the Sacrament of Penance:

1. Prayer to the Holy Ghost for light to know our sins;
2. Examination of conscience from the last good confession;
3. The telling of our sins, including for mortal sins, the number and the circumstances that change their nature;
4. Satisfaction, or the performance of the penance assigned.

The Division of Time.

A frequent communicant need not spend much time examining his conscience, but he can spend a good deal of time on his contrition. One to four is a good proportion to assign to these two duties.

A Sin From Your Past Life.

Absolution cannot be given if there is no sin confessed. It not infrequently happens that a penitent will confess what he supposes are sins, when through defect of intention they are not sins at all. Every penitent should make a practice of mentioning a sin already confessed in his past life. This protects the Absolution and saves the priest from asking unnecessary questions.

John F. O'Hara, C.S.C.,
Prefect of Religion.