

How To Make A General Confession  
(Of special value to graduating Seniors, and draftees.)

What is a General Confession? It is a get-together with yourself and God and then with a priest, in or outside the confessional box, to mention past sins, past or present obstacles to advancement in virtue and problems that require the judgment and advice of a priest--all this for the purpose of burying the past forever and of preparing one's self for a more perfect service of Christ in the future.

Subject matter for the Confession: Simply, anything that is on the mind, whatever is disturbing one's peace of heart, any question regarding the soul that wants answering. Past sin, bad habits, unsettled worries, unsolved doubts, are material for the General Confession. (The Confession can cover one's entire life or a period or phase of it, for example, the past year, college days, prolonged sickness or responsible office, etc.) Some people make a General Confession every year.

Preparation: (When to make one.) Since its purpose is to help the soul serve Christ better in the future, unhampered by worries and filled with a firm determination to make progress in doing good, and guided by a revised plan of living, the General Confession is recommended to anyone about to get a new start in life, (the sinner, the man who is worried), or a start in a new state in life (like the Service, college life, civilian life after life in the Service, marriage, professional life, religious life.)

How to go about it. Plan to make the General Confession in two or three days. (This is not an ordinary confession; so a few minutes of preparation for it will bring little lasting profit.) Carry the remembrance of the General Confession quietly and without effort for forty-eight hours or so--you will be surprised at the picture of yourself this reflection will give you. And then two or three times during those days of recollection take a timeout period (about 15 minutes) to be with yourself and God (in the chapel on your knees or seated, walking about the lake--with a cigarette if it helps reflection.)

This recollection will cause two or three big things to bubble to the top; these are the items you will want to bring to the priest; they may be past sins which continue to disturb you, a better understanding and fear of a habit, or a question of how to act in the future. You may make a written note of the matter you wish to discuss; it's not necessary. Make no effort to arrive at numbers in reference to sin; a general survey suffices ("A habit of two years." "About once a week." "About twice in my life.") The General Confession is not to be an ordeal. If it will upset one's peace of heart or cause scruples, it should not be made. One's principal sins and problems, not ALL past sins and ALL DETAILS, is the object of the Confession.

The General Confession will be a failure if one gets a good picture of his sinful past and then makes no acts of sorrow, no firm determination to avoid all future occasions of sin and no workable resolutions (more prayer and the Sacraments.) So PRAYER must be part of the two or three special periods of solitude in the chapel or while hiking. MAKE THE CONFESSION WHEN THE PRIEST IS NOT RUSHED. Make a special appointment with your confessor, or use the morning or evening facilities of the Prefects of Religion (Sorin and Cavanaugh Chapels. Press the buzzer.) NOW, before you start to study for exams, is the time to make the General Confession.

Ask the man who made one. He will tell you about the lift you will get. You will leave the confessional relieved, happy, almost floating, especially if you have unburdened yourself for the first time in your life. When the priest gives you absolution after hearing your tale of woe, you will more keenly realize that the past is past, forgiven by Christ, and that the future holds high promise for you and the glorious prospect of reaching heaven.