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When You Go To Confession

Don't wait until you get into the box to examine your conscience. Make some little preparation beforehand by reviewing the Commandments, and the duties of your state in life. Then make an Act of Contrition.

Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession. This information helps the priest to understand, and to judge your case; it might very well provide a clue for helpful advice.

Be specific in confessing your sins. Mention extenuating circumstances. The priest will not ask any more questions than are necessary; he doesn't want to ask any at all. But he must learn the species and the number of all mortal sins, if your confession is to be complete. Don't, for example, tell the priest that you were "naughty" three times. The expression may mean much to you; but it doesn't enlighten the confessor in the least. He must be told the species -- because the malice of a sin varies according to the species.

Start with the mortal sins; get them out of the way. Then, it is unlikely that you will forget any; and you will have no reason to doubt having made an entire confession. Next, mention the deliberate and persistent venial sins, if you wish. Some shy individuals dilly-dally on the threshold of forgiveness by singing off forty imperfections; then suddenly sneak through on great speed and very little voice, with twelve mortal sins hidden in their cheek.

Needless explanations and great detail are out of order. So are the quotations of endless dialogue. Tell your own sins only; let your neighbor tell his. Again, all the confessor desires and requires are the number and the species of the sins.

Don't belittle your guilt. Don't exaggerate the number of your sins.

In case of doubt regarding a particular sin, confess it as doubtful, or as God sees you guilty. You need have no worry then of having omitted what should have been confessed. You should not receive Communion with a doubtful mortal sin on your conscience -- although in a specific case a confessor may instruct a scrupulous penitent to go to Communion unless he is sure that he is guilty of grave sin. A scrupulous person is an exception to the general rule.

A general confession is out of order during Mass, or when long lines are waiting outside the box. Nor should you go into the box during the Consecration of the Mass.

"Mention A Sin From Your Past Life"

When the priest says that to you in confession, don't argue the point with him -- tell a sin that you have already confessed.

Why does he say it? Because he judges that what you have told is either not sinful at all -- through lack of advertence, or lack of matter, or lack of deliberation -- or only doubtfully sinful. In either case, he cannot give absolution unless you tell him something that he judges is really sinful, and sufficient matter for absolution. To get the absolution for which you came to confession -- and with it the graces of the sacrament -- you must tell a sin already confessed in your past life. This provides the certain matter required for absolution.

PRAYERS Deceased: mother of Jack Parker, '50; father of Tim Driscoll of Morrissey.
Ill: friend of Jerry Wade of Howard; grandmother of Fred Miller of Howard;
mother of Fr. Joseph Kehoe, C.S.C.; Sister-in-law of Olivia Manis.