

Blood, Blood! We still  
need donors. See the  
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Daily Mass, Communion, and  
Rosary for the Poor Souls,  
these days. Don't forget  
them!

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When You Go To Confession  
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It's true that a daily, or frequent, communicant need not spend much time examining his conscience. But he should make some little preparation beforehand by reviewing the Commandments, and the duties of his state in life. And we can all spend a good deal of time on our Contrition. One to four is a good proportion to assign to these two duties. We are bound to confess only our mortal sins. Hence, if you spend one minute examining your conscience, take four to tell God you're sorry.

Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession -- it helps him to understand, and to judge your case. It might very well provide a clue for helpful advice. Then be specific in confessing your sins; and mention extenuating circumstances. The priest will not ask any more questions than are necessary; indeed, he doesn't want to ask any at all. But he must learn the species and the number of all mortal sins. Don't simply say that you violated a particular Commandment; tell him what you did in violating that Commandment. You see, 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, if you wish, mention the deliberate and persistent venial sins. Needless explanations and great detail are out of order -- especially quotations, endless dialogue, and the like. Furthermore, tell your own sins only; and let your neighbor tell his. Don't bring the confessor up to date on the entire neighborhood.

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 committed what should have been confessed.

A general confession is out of order during Mass, or when long lines are waiting outside. Pick out a quiet evening during the week to make a general confession. It is equally appropriate for you not to enter the confessional during the Consecration of the Mass.

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. Hence, 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.

The Absolution is given while the penitent recites the Act of Contrition. Then, the priest gives the penitent a sign when it is time to leave, by saying, "Go in peace," or "God bless you," or some similar expression. The Act of Contrition should be recited aloud in the confessional -- the priest must have an external sign of the penitent's sorrow, and his firm purpose of amendment.

One may receive Communion before he completes the penance imposed. But, if time permits, the penance should not be delayed. A grave penance begets a grave obligation. The safest practice is simply to fulfill the penance immediately after you return to your pew. Your little Notre Dame Prayerbook provides an appropriate little prayer that should be added to your penance. It recalls the great mercy of God, and disposes you to be grateful, and to make your firm purpose of amendment mean something more than mere words in your daily life.