



**THE SACRAMENTAL RITE  
OF CONFESSION**

This booklet is intended for your use as a guide to the  
Sacramental Rite of Confession in the Episcopal Church,  
and at St. James in particular.

To schedule an appointment for confession, please call or text Fr. Stephen at  
864-907-6565.

Privacy and discretion is assured.



SAINT JAMES  
EPISCOPAL

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Monday – Friday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
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**I**f we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.  
*1 John 1:8, 10*

As human beings, we all sin. Sometimes we sin by things we have done, and at other times, by not doing something that we should have. But the heart of sin is our failure to follow God's will for our lives, to love God with our whole heart, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

**W**e acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.

*Confession of Sin, Rite I*

The result of our sin is twofold. First, our sins are offensive to God, who is perfect in holiness and righteousness. While God never stops loving us as His children, our sins distort our relationship with our loving God and all of creation. Second, our sins have an impact on us as well. Over time, the very recollection of what we have done causes us pain and the burden of carrying our sins becomes almost unbearable.

**B**ut if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

*1 John 2:1-2*

God does not want our sins to alienate us from Him. To make a way for human beings to “get right with God,” God sent His only son Jesus Christ to carry our sins to the cross so that they might be forgiven. God wants us to be in right relationship with Him and wants us to confess our sins so that they can be forgiven and the barriers between us and God removed.

**T**hen the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

*John 20:19-23*

God desires that we repent of our sins and change our way of living so that we don't keep making the same mistakes. To this end, Jesus gave his disciples the authority to forgive sins in His name, and to pronounce the absolution of these sins to those who show that they are truly sorry for what they have done and intend to live a new life. The Priests of the Church, having been ordained with the laying-on of hands by a Bishop, the successors to the apostles, have received this authority to forgive and absolve sins in Jesus' name and in the name of the Church.

**E**xamine your lives and conduct by the rule of God's commandments, that you may perceive wherein you have offended in what you have done or left undone, whether in thought, word, or deed. And acknowledge your sins before Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life, being ready to make restitution for all injuries and wrongs done by you to others; and also being ready to forgive those who have offended you, in order that you yourselves may be forgiven. And then, being reconciled with one another, come to the banquet of that most heavenly Food.

And if, in your preparation, you need help and counsel, then go and open your grief to a discreet and understanding priest, and confess your sins, that you may receive the benefit of absolution, and spiritual counsel and advice; to the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the strengthening of your faith.

*An Exhortation before Holy Communion*

**T**he secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor, and must under no circumstances be broken.

*Book of Common Prayer, p. 446*

The Priests of the Church are always willing to offer the Sacramental Rite of Confession to those who are seeking a private and personal experience of God's forgiveness in their lives, as well as spiritual counsel. The seal of confession is absolute and the Priests of the Church are forbidden to share the content of a confession with anyone.

## PREPARATION

Prior to participating in the Sacramental Rite of Confession in the Episcopal Church, it is wise to take some time to prepare yourself through a period of self-examination. During this period of self-examination, we often find that we have sinned in ways we have not previously considered. Do not be afraid to write down your thoughts and recollections on a piece of paper or at the back of this booklet as you prepare for confession so that you can reference your thoughts during your confession. The Priest will set aside adequate time to hear your confession, regardless of how long it may be.

All preparation for confession should be done prayerfully. Try using this prayer before self-examination to help you focus on the task at hand:

### PRAYER BEFORE SELF-EXAMINATION

**O** Holy Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding and of knowledge, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me, and help me now to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before Your judgment seat. Bring to mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by self-love. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, knowing how deeply they have wounded the loving heart of my Heavenly Father; and help me to make a good confession that all stain of guilt may be washed away in the Precious Blood of my Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

## SELF-EXAMINATION

**T**he Sacrifice of God is a troubled Spirit;  
A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

*Psalm 51, verse 18*

Think of yourself as God's child, and of the folly of following your own will rather than that of your loving Father. Do not be in a hurry, and do not be troubled if you cannot remember everything. Be honest with God and with yourself; this is all God asks of you. Do not fret about your sins. Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned. Consider the following areas in which we humans most often sin when preparing your confession:

**ANGER.** Open rebellion against God or our fellow creatures. Its purpose and desire is to eliminate any obstacle to our self-seeking, to retaliate against any threat to our security, to avenge insult or injury to our person.

**ARROGANCE.** Insisting that others conform to our wishes, recognize our leadership, accept our own estimate of our worth. Being overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, obstinate.

**AVARICE.** Inordinate pursuit of wealth or material things. Theft, dishonesty, misrepresentation, or sharing in stolen goods. Cheating in business, taxes, school or games. Making worldly success the goal of our life or the standard for judging others.

**CONTEMPT.** Scorn of another's virtue, ability, shortcomings, or failings. Prejudice against those we consider inferior, or who consider us inferior, or who seem to threaten our security or position. Ridicule of persons, institutions or ideals.

**COVETOUSNESS.** The refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the inordinate accumulation of material things; in the use of other persons for our personal advantage; or in the quest for status, power or security at their expense.

**CRUELTY.** Deliberate infliction of pain, mental or physical. Tormenting of animals.

**DISOBEDIENCE.** Rejection of God's known will in favor of our own interests or pleasures. Disobedience of the legitimate laws, regulations or authority of the church, state, parents, teachers, etc.; or slow and reluctant obedience. Failure when in authority to fulfill responsibilities or consider the best interests of those under us. Refusal to learn God's nature or will as revealed in scripture, expounded in instructions or expert advice, or discernible through prayer, meditation or the reading of religious books. Absorption in our own affairs, leaving little time, energy or interest for the things of God. Violation of confidence. Breaking of legitimate promises or contracts. Irresponsibility. Treachery. Unnecessary disappointment of another, or the causing of shame or anxiety to those who love us.

**DISTRUST.** Refusal to recognize God's wisdom, providence and love. Worry, anxiety, misgivings, or perfectionism. Attempts to discern or control the future by spiritualism, astrology, fortunetelling or the like. Magic or superstition. Over-sensitiveness. Expectation that others will dislike, reject, or mistreat us; over-readiness so to interpret their attitude, or quickness to take offense. Unfounded suspicions. Timidity in accepting responsibility, or cowardice in facing difficulty or suffering. Surrender to feelings of depression, gloom, pessimism, discouragement, self-pity, or fear of death, instead of fighting to be brave, cheerful and hopeful.

**DOMINATION.** Seeking to use or possess others. Over protection of children; refusal to correct or punish lest we lose their affection; insistence that they conform to our ideal for them contrary to their own vocation. Imposing our will on others by force, guile, whining, or refusal to cooperate. Over-readiness to advise or command; abuse of authority. Patronizing, pauperizing, putting others under a debt of gratitude, or considering ourselves ill-used when others' affection or compliance is not for sale. Respect of persons, favoritism, partiality, flattery, fawning, or bribery to win support or affection. Refusal to uphold the truth to fulfill duties, to perform good acts, or to defend those wrongfully attacked, because we fear criticism or ridicule, or because we seek to gain the favor or approval of others. Leading, tempting or encouraging another to sin.

**ENVY.** Dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation, manifested in begrudging His gifts and vocations to others.

**GLUTTONY.** The overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by extension the inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort.

**IMMODESTY.** Stimulation of sexual desire in others by word, dress, or actions; or in one's self by reading, pictures, or fantasies. Collecting or recounting inappropriate stories.

**IMPENITENCE.** Refusal to search out and face up to our sins, or to confess them or admit them before God. Disregard of our sins or pretending that we are better than we are. Self-justification or discounting our sins as insignificant, natural, inevitable, or “not our fault.” Self-righteous comparison of ourselves with others. Refusal to accept just punishment or to make due reparation when possible. Deceit or lying to escape the consequences of our sins, or allowing another to suffer the blame for our faults. Overcompensation or attempts at self-reform or self-vengeance, to avoid surrender to God in humble penitence. Shame (hurt pride), sorrow for ourselves because our sins make us less respectable than we like to think we are, or because we fear punishment or injury to our reputation, rather than sorrow for what sin is in the eyes of God. Refusal to admit that we were in the wrong or to apologize. Refusal to accept forgiveness from God or others. Doubt that God can forgive our sins, or failure to use the means of getting assurance of his forgiveness when we need it. Unwillingness to forgive ourselves.

**INDIFFERENCE.** Unconcern over injustice to others, especially that caused by currently accepted social standards; or not caring about the suffering of the world. Failure to become adequately informed on both sides of contemporary issues or on the Christian principles involved. Neglect of duties to state or community. Failure to provide adequately for, or to treat justly those in our employ. Ignoring of needy, lonely or unpopular persons in our own or the parish family, or in the neighborhood; or unwillingness to minister to them. Insufficient attention to the religious and other needs of our family. Failure to fulfill our obligation of Christian missionary witness, or to take a full and informed part to make the church’s unity and holiness a manifest reality on earth.

**INORDINATE AMBITION.** Pursuit of status, power, influence, reputation, or possessions at the expense of the moral law, of other obligations, or of the rights of others. Ruthless or unfair competition. Putting self or family first. Conformity to standards we recognize as wrong or inadequate in order to get ahead. Intrigue or conspiracy for self-advancement.

**INTEMPERANCE.** Overindulgence in food, drink, smoking, or other physical pleasures. Fastidiousness, fussiness, demanding excessively high standards. Condemnation of some material things or pleasures as evil in themselves, attempting to prohibit their use rather than their abuse.

**IRREVERANCE.** Deliberate neglect of the worship of God every Sunday in His church or being content with only a passing participation in it. Disregard of Holy Days or of additional opportunities for giving God honor. Failure to thank God or to express our gratitude

adequately. Disrespect for God or holy things by deliberately treating them, in thought, word or deed, in a profane, contemptuous or familiar manner. Use of holy things for personal advantage, or the attempt to bribe or placate God by religious practices or promises.

**JEALOUSY.** Offense at the talents, success or good fortune of others. Selfish or unnecessary rivalry or competition. Pleasure at others' difficulties or distress. Belittling others.

**LACK OF DISCIPLINE.** Negligence in keeping the days of fasting or abstinence, or failure to use other needed means of self-discipline. Neglect of bodily health. Not getting sufficient rest, recreation, exercise or wholesome nourishment. Failure to use or to cooperate with available medical care when ill. Use of sickness as a means of escape from responsibilities.

**LAZINESS.** Indolence in performing spiritual, mental or physical duties, or neglect of family, business or social obligations or courtesies. Procrastination of disliked tasks. Busyness or triviality to avoid more important commitments. Devotion of excessive time to rest, recreation, amusement, television, or the like. Waste of employer's time, or shoddy or inadequate work.

**LUST.** The misuse of sex for personal gratification, debasing it from the holy purpose for which God has given it to us.

**MALICE.** Ill-will, false accusations, slander, backbiting. Reading false motives into others' behavior. Initiation, collection or retelling of gossip. Arousing, fostering or organizing antagonism against others. Unnecessary criticism, even when true. Deliberate annoyance of others, teasing or bullying.

**PENURIOSNESS.** Undue protection of wealth or security. Selfish insistence on vested interests or on claimed rights. Refusal to support or help those who have a claim on us. Sponging on others. Stinginess. Failure to give due proportion of our income to Church a charity, or of our time and energy to good works. Failure to pay pledges promised to the Church or charities, when able to do so.

**PRESUMPTION.** Dependence on oneself rather than on God, with the consequent neglect of the means of grace: the sacraments and prayer. Failure to do ordinary duties on the grounds that we are superior persons. Satisfaction or complacency over our spiritual achievements. Refusal to avoid, when possible, occasions of temptation. Preference for our own ideas, customs, plans or ways of doing things. Foolish optimism. Failure to recognize our job as a

divine vocation, or to offer our work to God. Unwillingness to surrender and abide in Christ, to let Him act in and through us. Failure to offer God regularly in intercession the persons or causes that have, or should enlist our interest and support.

**PRIDE.** Putting of oneself in the place of God as the center and objective of our life, or in some part thereof. It is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent on God for our existence, and placed by him in a specific relationship to the rest of his creation.

**PRODIGALITY.** Waste of natural resources or personal possessions. Extravagance or living beyond our income, to impress others or to maintain status. Failure to pay debts. Gambling more than we can afford to lose, or to win unearned profits. Unnecessary borrowing or carelessness with others' money. Expenditure on self of what is needed for the welfare of others.

**PRUDERY.** Fear of sex or condemnation of it as evil in itself. Refusal to seek adequate sexual instruction or the attempt to prevent others from obtaining it. Stimulation of excessive and harmful curiosity by undue secrecy. Repression of sex.

**PUGNACITY.** Attack upon another in anger. Murder in deed or desire. Combativeness or nursing of grudges. Injury to another by striking, cursing or insulting him; or by damaging his reputation or property. Quarrelsomeness, bickering, contradiction, nagging, rudeness, or snubbing.

**RESENTMENT.** Refusal to discern, accept or fulfill God's vocation. Dissatisfaction with the talents, abilities, or opportunities He has given us. Unwillingness to face up to difficulties or sacrifices. Unjustified rebellion or complaint at the circumstances of our lives. Escape from reality or the attempt to force our will upon it. Transference to God, to our parents, to society, or to other individuals the blame for our situation; hatred of God, or antisocial behavior. Cynicism. Annoyance at the contrariness of things; profanity or grumbling.

**RETALIATION.** Vengeance for wrongs real or imagined, or the plotting thereof. Harsh or excessive punishment. Hostility, sullenness, or rash judgment. Refusal to forgive, or to offer or accept reconciliation. Unwillingness to love, to do good to, or to pray for enemies. Boycotting or ostracizing another for selfish reasons. Spoiling others' pleasure by uncooperativeness or disdain, because we have not got our way, or because we feel out of sorts or superior.

**SENTIMENTALITY.** Being satisfied with pious feelings and beautiful Ritual without striving to obey God's will.

**SLOTH.** The refusal to respond to our opportunities for growth, service or sacrifice.

**SNOBBERY.** Pride over race, family, position, personality, education, skill, achievements or possessions.

**UNCHASTITY.** Violation of the Church's marriage laws. Lack of consideration for one's partner in the use of the marital relationship. Refusal to fulfill the purpose of Holy Matrimony in the bringing forth and giving adequate care to children, or to take our full share in the responsibilities or work involved. Unfaithfulness to one's spouse. Sexual indulgence outside matrimony, in thought or act, alone or with others.

**VANITY.** Crediting to ourselves rather than to God our talents, abilities, insights, accomplishments, good works. Refusal to admit indebtedness to others, or adequately to express gratitude for their help. Hypocrisy. Pretense to virtues we do not possess. False humility. Harsh judgment on others for faults we excuse in ourselves. Boasting, exaggeration, drawing attention to ourselves by talking too much, by claiming ability, wisdom, experience, or influence we do not have, or by eccentric or ostentatious behavior. Undue concern over, or expenditure of time, money, or energy on looks, dress, surroundings, etc., in order to impress others; or deliberate slovenliness for the same purpose. Seeking, desiring or relishing flattery or compliments.

Adapted from *Saint Augustine's Prayer Book*  
Holy Cross Publications  
First Edition 1947

## PRAYER AFTER SELF-EXAMINATION

**O** my God, how great are my sins! Would that I had never offended thee. If by carelessness or ignorance I have forgotten anything in my self-examination, show it to me now that I make a good confession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



*The following pages contain the liturgy that is used during the Reconciliation of a Penitent (Sacramental Rite of Confession).*

*Please bring this booklet and your notes with you to your confession.*

# The Reconciliation of a Penitent

## Form One

*The Penitent begins*

Bless me, for I have sinned.

*The Priest says*

The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips that you may truly and humbly confess your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

*Penitent*

I confess to Almighty God, to his Church, and to you, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed, in things done and left undone; especially\_\_\_\_\_. For these and all other sins which I cannot now remember, I am truly sorry. I pray God to have mercy on me. I firmly intend amendment of life, and I humbly beg forgiveness of God and his Church, and ask you for counsel, direction, and absolution.

*Here the Priest may offer counsel, direction, and comfort.*

*The Priest then pronounces this absolution*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you all your offenses; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

*or this*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, and who conferred power on his Church to forgive sins, absolve you through my ministry by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and restore you in the perfect peace of the Church. *Amen.*

*The Priest adds*

The Lord has put away all your sins.

*Penitent* Thanks be to God.

*The Priest concludes*

Go (*or abide*) in peace, and pray for me, a sinner.

*Declaration of Forgiveness*

*to be used by a Deacon or Lay Person*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, forgives your sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

## Form Two

*The Priest and Penitent begin as follows*

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions only too well,  
and my sin is ever before me.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One,  
have mercy upon us.

*Penitent* Pray for me, a sinner.

*Priest*

May God in his love enlighten your heart, that you may  
remember in truth all your sins and his unfailing mercy.

*Amen.*

*The Priest may then say one or more of these or other appropriate verses of Scripture,  
first saying*

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I  
will refresh you. *Matthew 11:28*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,  
to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but  
have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received,  
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

*1 Timothy 1:15*

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.

*1 John 2:1-2*

*The Priest then continues*

Now, in the presence of Christ, and of me, his minister, confess your sins with a humble and obedient heart to Almighty God, our Creator and our Redeemer.

*The Penitent says*

Holy God, heavenly Father, you formed me from the dust in your image and likeness, and redeemed me from sin and death by the cross of your Son Jesus Christ. Through the water of baptism you clothed me with the shining garment of his righteousness, and established me among your children in your kingdom. But I have squandered the inheritance of your saints, and have wandered far in a land that is waste.

Especially, I confess to you and to the Church...

*Here the penitent confesses particular sins.*

Therefore, O Lord, from these and all other sins I cannot now remember, I turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Receive me again into the arms of your mercy, and restore me to the blessed company of your faithful people; through him in whom you have redeemed the world, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*The Priest may then offer words of comfort and counsel.*

*Priest*

Will you turn again to Christ as your Lord?

*Penitent* I will.

*Priest*

Do you, then, forgive those who have sinned against you?

*Penitent* I forgive them.

*Priest*

May Almighty God in mercy receive your confession of sorrow and of faith, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

*The Priest then lays a hand upon the penitent's head (or extends a hand over the penitent), saying one of the following*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, and who conferred power on his Church to forgive sins, absolve you through my ministry by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and restore you in the perfect peace of the Church. *Amen.*

*or this*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you all your offenses; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

*The Priest concludes*

Now there is rejoicing in heaven; for you were lost, and are found; you were dead, and are now alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. Go (or abide) in peace. The Lord has put away all your sins.

*Penitent* Thanks be to God.

*Declaration of Forgiveness  
to be used by a Deacon or Lay Person*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, forgives your sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*



## NOTES



SAINT JAMES  
EPISCOPAL

*St. James Episcopal Church is, above all,  
a welcoming, caring community.  
We are dedicated to worship, outreach,  
fellowship and growth in the service of Christ.*