



## Communion: Good Fruit

Christ invites his followers into a **deep communion with the Father**. To be in communion with Jesus means to live in **close friendship** with Him. He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will **bear much fruit**, because without me you can do nothing." (*Jn. 15:5*).

When we are in communion with Jesus, we live by faith and **rely on Him** in everything we do. To be in communion with Jesus means to experience His **forgiveness, constantly receive His love** for us, and allow that love to flow outward to others. When we are living in communion with Christ, the good "**fruit of the Spirit**" is borne in our midst, namely "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal. 5:22-23*).

**"If in our heart there is no mercy, no joy of forgiveness, we are not in communion with God, even if we observe all of his precepts, for it is love that saves, not the practice of precepts alone. ... This is the love of God, his joy: Forgiveness. He waits for us always! Maybe someone has some heaviness in his heart: 'But, I did this, I did that ... .' He expects you! He is your father: He waits for you always!"**

– Pope Francis

## An Act of Contrition

**Lord Jesus**, to know You is eternal life. I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. I love You and I place my trust in You.

**I am sorry** for all of my sins and for withholding myself from You in any way. Please forgive me and heal any pain I have caused others. I forgive anyone who has hurt me, and I ask You to bless them. In Your Name, Jesus, I renounce anything in my life that is not of You that I have welcomed into my mind or heart. Wash me in mercy and fill me with Your Precious Blood and the Holy Spirit.



**Father**, all of my need for love and affection is found in Your embrace. May I never leave my home in Your heart again. By Your grace, I resolve to remain in Your shelter and abide in Your shade, where You restore to me the joy of Your salvation (*Ps. 91, Ps. 51*). Amen.

**"God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. ... With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew."**

– Pope Francis

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# Confession and Receiving God's Mercy

## A Guide for Penitents and Priests

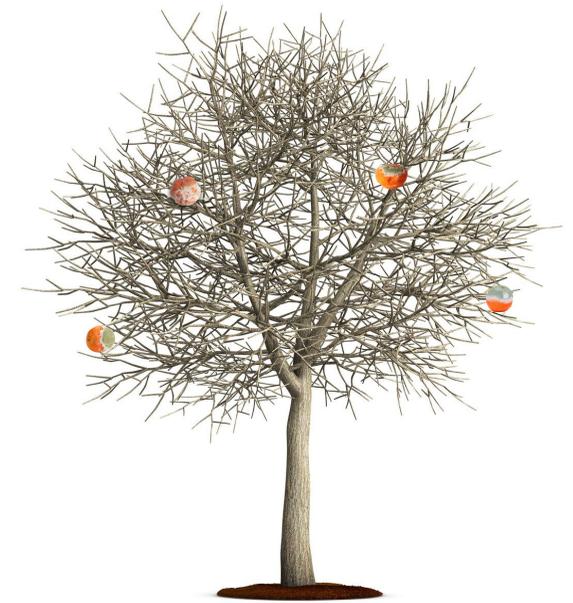
**"Yes, it can be discouraging when we fall. But do not focus only on your sins. Look to Jesus. Trust His mercy and go to Him with confidence. He will always welcome you home."**

– Pope Leo



**T**hrough the Holy Spirit and the grace of baptism, we are **beloved sons and daughters** of the Father in Jesus. But our sins have affected this relationship and we often live separated from God. God is **always seeking us**. He even sent His Son Jesus, not to condemn the world, but to give His life to redeem it (*Jn 3:16*). May we allow Jesus to find us, and may we **receive His mercy!**

**Confession is our invitation** to reject the isolation of sin and receive God's perfect love, which casts out all fear (*1 Jn 4:19*). **Choose now** to accept the Father's merciful embrace and live in communion with Jesus, who makes all things new (*Rev. 21:5*).



## Isolation: Bad Fruit

**T**o be in **isolation from Christ** means that a person is living according to the lie that **"I am alone."** When we live in isolation, we rely on ourselves rather than on God. When we are in isolation, we are **not disposed to receiving God's love and forgiveness**. To live in isolation is to live in a place of darkness, heaviness, emptiness, insecurity, and unbelief.

Jesus gives a strong warning to those who are living in isolation: **"If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned"** (*Jn. 15:6*). This isolation is the root of so many of our sins. Living in isolation leads to **"bad fruit"** — "immorality, impurity, ... idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, ... and the like" (*Gal. 5:19-21*).

**"One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation ... Poverty is often produced by a rejection of God's love, by man's basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient. ... It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God."**

– Pope Benedict XVI

## Preparing for Confession

The Church's living tradition speaks of the **Seven Deadly Sins**. Opposed to these are the **Heavenly Virtues**. At the root of the deadly sins can be **lies we've believed**, which often cover over even **deeper fears in our hearts**. † Below, in the left column, are some **common lies and fears** that can operate within us if we don't exercise the gift of faith. In the right column are some Scriptures that can help us grow in communion with Christ, from which the life of **virtue and holiness flourishes**. † Prayerfully **ask the Holy Spirit** to reveal any **lies and fears** that have led you to sin. As you become aware of these lies and fears, renounce them **in the name of Jesus** by the authority given to you in baptism, and ask the Father for the opposing **Heavenly Virtue**. For example, "In the Name of Jesus, I renounce the lie and fear that I am alone, which has led me to the pride of self-reliance. Father, I trust that You are always with me." Or, "In the Name of Jesus, I renounce the lie that I am abandoned. Believing this lie has led me into a fear of loneliness and the sin of lust. Father, I trust You will never reject me."

### SEVEN DEADLY SINS that lead us to **isolation** from Christ

#### Pride

*Vanity · Arrogance · Self-Reliance*  
"I am alone. I need to look out for myself."  
"I determine what is right or wrong."

#### Envy

*Comparison · Jealousy · Criticism*  
"I must be perfect. I am inadequate."  
"Nothing good ever happens to me."

#### Greed

*Selfishness · Love of Money · Covetousness*  
"It should be mine." · "My time is my own."  
"God is not enough for me."

#### Gluttony

*Worthlessness · Self-Pity · Instant Gratification*  
"I can't say no to myself or to others."  
"It doesn't matter anyway."

#### Lust

*Loneliness · Insecurity · Escaping to Impurity*  
"I am not desirable and will be abandoned."  
"Others exist for my sexual pleasure."

#### Anger

*Resentment · Self-Hatred · Revenge*  
"I am never going to forgive \_\_\_\_."  
"I am not up to what's being asked of me."

#### Sloth

*Doubt & Slow to Trust · Apathy · Despair*  
"I have to earn God's love."  
"God has no plan for my life."

### HEAVENLY VIRTUES that lead us to **communion** with Christ

#### Humility / Loving Obedience

**Lk. 1:38** "Here I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."

#### Kindness / Admiration

**Lk. 15:31** "My son, you are here with me always; and everything that I have is yours."

#### Charity / Generosity

**Phil. 2:3-4** "In humility, count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

#### Temperance / Self-Control

**Ps. 23:1-2** "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose."

#### Chastity / Purity

**Ps. 51:12, 14** "Create in me a clean heart, O God; put a steadfast spirit within me. ... Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit."

#### Patience / Forgiveness

**Lk 23:34** "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

#### Diligence / Zeal

**Jer. 29:11** "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future full of hope."

## Celebrating the Sacrament

### 1. PREPARE AND BEGIN

Recall the words of Jesus: "Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you" (*Mt. 11:28*). Ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your conscience (using the guide to the left), then **present yourself** to the priest with a readiness to name and confess your sins. Make the **sign of the cross** to formally begin.

### 2. HEAR THE WORD

The priest will **welcome you** and may provide a Biblical passage or image that encourages you to **trust** in the Father's goodness and to **be open and receptive** to His healing mercy. For example:

**Lk. 15:11-32** The image of the Father **running towards you** with great tenderness and joy to embrace you and welcome you home.

**Jn. 10:10-16** Being **carried home** by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who says, "I have come so that you may have life and have it in abundance."

**Lk. 2:7,16-20** Being **held by Mary**, the Blessed Mother, as Jesus was in the Nativity.

**Lk. 7:40-48** The truth that the one who is forgiven more is **able to love more**.

**Lk. 19:9-10** Jesus saying to Zacchaeus, "Today, **salvation has come to your house** ... for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

**Jn. 13:1-10** Jesus washing the disciples' feet — *your* feet as a **believer**.

### 3. CONFESS YOUR SINS

At this time, tell the priest an estimate of **how long it has been** since your last confession. Then **name and confess your sins**.

You may also name the lies and fears that have led you to sin. By confessing your sins, you declare that they are not welcome in your heart, and you give God permission to **break their power** over you.

### 4. MAKE AN ACT OF CONTRITION

The priest will then invite you to pray an **Act of Contrition**. You may use the one on the back of this brochure, another Act of Contrition from the Church's tradition, or a brief prayer from your heart that expresses **sincere sorrow**. For example: "Jesus Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner."

### 5. RECEIVE GOD'S MERCY

The priest will then pray the **prayer of absolution**, **forgiving your sins** in and through the Father's mercy, the Son's presence as reconciling love, and in the healing power of the Holy Spirit. The priest prays with the **unique authority** of his ordination, forgiving **in the person of Jesus** (*Jn. 20:22-23*), and reconciling **on behalf of the entire Church**. Listen to the words of absolute forgiveness and **receive the beautiful gift** of God's mercy.

### 6. GIVE THANKS AND GO IN PEACE

After praying the absolution the priest may say: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good." You

respond: "For His mercy endures forever." The priest concludes the sacrament by saying: "The Lord has **freed you** from your sins. Go in peace." This is your invitation to receive the **peace of Jesus**, the peace the world cannot give (*Jn. 14:27*).

### 7. DO YOUR PENANCE

After you depart, **do the penance** that the priest prescribed as soon as time permits. The penance could be a prayer or act of charity that will act as a **spiritual medicine** and assist you in receiving the forgiving love of Jesus. Recall an image that disposes you to living in communion with God. Give thanks again for the Father's mercy, asking to walk humbly and confidently with Jesus as **friend and companion**.

