

Sacrament of Reconciliation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Can I receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at my church?

At the current time and under certain conditions, yes. This may change at any time depending on local public health information and directives.

Personal conditions

You can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation **in church** if you:

- 1) have not traveled out of country or out of Saskatchewan in the last 2 weeks;
- 2) are not a member of a vulnerable group (unfortunately, this includes the elderly, those with underlying medical conditions, and healthcare workers); and
- 3) have no signs of illness, either yourself or in your household.

***Important Note:** It takes time for symptoms to appear after COVID-19 exposure, and some of those who are infected show no symptoms at all. It is safest to assume you are infected, and to work to avoid transmitting the illness to others.

Church conditions

You can receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation **in church** if:

- 1) your pastor is available (please call first);
- 2) you use hand sanitizer upon entry, and use a sanitizer to clean where you will sit or kneel;
- 3) you avoid touching surfaces with your hands or passing items from person to person;
- 4) there is room for at least 2 metres of space between you and your pastor; and
- 5) there are fewer than 8 other people in that area of the building.

***Notes:** 1) Public health directives do not allow gatherings for communal penitential services at this time.

New 2) Your parish may require that you wear a mask, so please check before visiting. Please also consider wearing a mask anyway, in order to protect your pastor and other parishioners.

What if conditions do not allow me to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in church?

Contact your pastor to find out whether there are other options available that still comply with public health directives.

Pope Francis addressed this issue in his homily on March 20, 2020¹:

"But many people today would tell me, 'Father, where can I find a priest, a confessor, because I can't leave the house? And I want to make peace with the Lord, I want him to embrace me, I want the Father's embrace.'"

The pope said his response would be, "Do what the Catechism (of the Catholic Church)² says. It is very clear: If you cannot find a priest to confess to, speak directly with God, your father, and tell him the truth. Say, 'Lord, I did this, this, this. Forgive me,' and ask for pardon with all your heart."

Make an act of contrition, the pope said, and promise God, "'I will go to confession afterward, but forgive me now.' And immediately you will return to a state of grace with God."

¹ <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2020/if-you-cant-go-to-confession-take-your-sorrow-directly-to-god-pope-says.cfm>

² https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P4C.HTM #1441, 1442