

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CONFESSION

BEFORE GOING TO CONFESSION:

1. Pray. Ask God to give you the grace to make a good confession.
2. Examine your conscience. Reflect on your life, trying to recall all the times you sinned against God since your last confession. Use an *Examination of Conscience* to help you.
3. Be truly sorry for your sins.
4. Make the resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future.

DURING CONFESSION:

1. Upon entering the confessional take your place. You may choose to either confess anonymously by going behind the screen or by going face-to-face if this option is available. Depending on the confessional, you may either kneel or sit.
2. Greet the priest. A simple **“Good Morning”** or **“Good Evening”** will do.
3. Then make the sign of the Cross and say the following: **“Bless me father, for I have sinned. It has been** (state how many days, weeks, months, or years and whether you’re) **since my last confession.** Indicate your current state in life (single or married; if married, whether married in the Church or Civil marriage) **These are my sins.”**
4. At this time, confess your sins briefly and clearly. It might be helpful to start with the one that is most difficult to say since it will make it easier to mention the rest. Remember that for a confession to be valid all mortal sins must be confessed. If you do not know whether a sin is mortal or not, ask the priest for guidance. If you do not know what to say, feel uneasy or ashamed, simply ask the priest to assist you. Be assured that he will help you to make a good confession. Simply answer the questions he might ask you without hiding anything out of shame or fear. Place your trust in God who is your merciful Father and wants to forgive you.
5. When you finish confessing your sins, say: **“...and I am truly sorry for all my sins.”**
6. The priest will then give you some words of advice and/or encouragement to help you become a better person and a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.
7. Following this, he will assign you a penance which you are to do when you leave the confessional. It might be something like saying a few prayers, doing an act of charity, or making some sacrifice. Whatever it is, make sure that you understand it clearly and that you remember to do it later.
8. After giving you the penance, the priest will ask you to say the Act of Contrition. You may say whichever one you know. If you do not know an Act of Contrition, ask the priest to assist you.
9. When you are finished praying the Act of Contrition, the priest will say the Prayer of Absolution. Listen attentively to that prayer, bless yourself as he makes the Sign of the Cross and at the end of the prayer, answer, **“Amen.”**
10. After giving you absolution, the priest will say, **“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.”** at which you respond, **“His mercy endures forever.”** The priest then concludes by saying, **“Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.”** and you respond, **“Thanks be to God.”**

AFTER CONFESSION:

1. Say a prayer of thanksgiving. Give thanks to God for the gift of his infinite mercy and for the sacrament you have just received.
2. Do your penance. It is advisable that you do your penance as soon as possible so that you will not forget to do it.

(PLEASE SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE)

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR ADULTS

TO HELP MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION

1. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

Do I seek to love God with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength (Dt 6:5)? Do I put anything or anyone above God? Do I pray daily? Have I had any involvement with the occult, witchcraft, wicca, ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, new age crystals, fortune telling, or the like? Have I put faith in horoscopes? Have I received Holy Communion in the state of Mortal Sin? Have I abused the Sacrament of Penance by lying to the priest or deliberately not confessing a mortal sin? Have I denied a truth of the Faith out of concern for the respect or opinion of others?

2. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

Have I used God's holy name irreverently, lightly or carelessly? Have I been angry with God? Have I insulted or blasphemed God, the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, or sacred places or things?

3. REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest, and relaxation, avoiding unnecessary work? Have I deliberately missed Holy Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I deliberately come late or left early from Mass without a good reason?

4. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

Do I honor and respect my parents? Have I deliberately hurt my parents? Do I treat my children with love and respect? Do I support and care for the well-being of all family members? Have I neglected family duties? Do I honor and obey my lawful superiors?

5. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

Have I deliberately harmed anyone? Have I had an abortion or encouraged or helped anyone to have an abortion? Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it? Have I abused drugs or alcohol? Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?

6. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

For the married: Am I faithful to my spouse in thought and action? Have I used artificial contraception, or been sterilized? Was I married outside the Church without proper permission of the Church?

For the unmarried: Have I engaged in sexual activity with anyone of either sex?

For all: Have I deliberately viewed pornographic magazines, videos or internet websites? Have I masturbated? Have I used impure language or told impure jokes? Do I dress modestly?

7. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods? Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others? Have I cheated anyone of what I owe? Do I gamble excessively? Do I share what I have with the poor and the Church according to my means? Have I pirated materials: videos, music, software?

8. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

Have I lied? Have I sworn falsely? Have I plagiarized or been academically dishonest? Have I gossiped? Have I revealed secrets or confidential information without good reason? Have I ruined the good name of others by spreading lies or maliciously revealing their faults and sins?

9. YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

Have I deliberately and consciously permitted sexual thoughts about anyone besides my spouse? Do I guard my imagination and senses? Have I watched shows, plays, pictures or movies that contain impure scenes with the deliberate intention of being aroused by them? Am I responsible about what I read?

10. YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

Am I envious of the possessions, abilities, talents, beauty, or success of others? Do I love my neighbor as myself? Is there anyone whom I do not love or refuse to love? Have I wished harm or misfortune on anyone? Do I forgive from my heart those who have hurt me? Do I harbor hatred or grudges? Do I pray for my enemies? Have I ridiculed or humiliated others? Do I seek to help others in need? Do I love myself as God loves me? Do I care for my physical, emotional, and spiritual health? Do I forgive myself for my sins after bringing them to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

Have I deliberately missed Mass on a Sunday or Holy Day of obligation without a serious reason? Do I go to confession at least once a year when I have serious sins to confess? Do I receive Holy Communion, at least once during Easter time? Do I take part in the major feasts celebrating Our Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints? Do I abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent (for ages 14 and over) and fast on one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (for ages 18-59)? Do I fast for one hour before Holy Communion (water and medicine allowed)? Do I contribute to support the material needs of the Church?