

A GUIDE FOR GOOD & EASY CONFESSION

The basic requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the "prodigal son" and to acknowledge our sins with true sorrow before the priest.

Sin in my Life

Modern society has lost a sense of sin. As a Catholic follower of Christ, I must make an effort to recognize sin in my daily actions, words and omissions.

The Gospels show how important is the forgiveness of our sins. Lives of saints prove that the person who grows in holiness has a stronger sense of sin, sorrow for sins, and a need for the Sacrament of Penance or Confession.

The Differences in Sins

As a result of Original Sin, human nature is weakened. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, takes away Original Sin, and turns us back toward God. The consequences of this weakness and the inclination to evil persist, and we often commit personal or actual sin.

Actual sin is sin which people commit. There are two kinds of actual sin, mortal and venial.

Mortal sin is a deadly offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul. Three simultaneous conditions must be fulfilled for a mortal sin: 1) the act must be something very serious; 2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done; 3) the person must have sufficient freedom of the will.

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

Prepare to go to Confession by thinking about your sins and making a firm commitment, asking God's help, not to sin again.

To receive the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation), we examine our conscience being honest about our sins and our failings. There are many ways to do this, including examining our lives and our actions against a summary of the moral law, such as the Ten Commandments. A daily examination at bedtime is best.

Here's one way to examine your conscience and see how you're doing.

REMEMBER THAT GOD GAVE MOSES TEN COMMANDMENTS, NOT TEN SUGGESTIONS!!!

Before Confession

Be truly sorry for your sins. The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God and which is reborn with repentance. The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. This does not mean that a promise never to fall again into sin is necessary. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION:

Come Holy Spirit into my soul. Enlighten my mind that I may know the sins I ought to confess, and grant me your grace to confess them fully, humbly and with a contrite heart. Help me to firmly resolve not to commit them again. O Blessed Virgin, Mother of my Redeemer, intercede for me through the Passion of Your Son, that I may obtain the grace to make a good confession. All you blessed Angels and Saints of God, pray for me, a sinner, that I may repent of my sins and my heart may be forever united with yours in eternal love. Amen.

Examination of Conscience

Before going to Confession you should make a review of mortal and venial sins since your last sacramental confession, and should express sorrow for sins, hatred for sins and a firm resolution not to sin again.

A helpful pattern for examination of conscience is to review the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church:

EXAMINING YOUR CONSCIENCE:

1. YOU MUST NOT HAVE ANY OTHER GODS BEFORE ME!

Do I truly put God first in my life by loving Him above all else? Do I place undue value and time on gaining possessions, pleasure or asserting my will? Have I abandoned my Faith or denied an article of the Catholic Faith under peer pressure? Do I seek God in prayer regularly? Do I pray only when I want something? Have I participated in the occult, witchcraft, fortune telling, ouija boards, séances, tarot cards, good luck charms? Have I actually believed in horoscopes? Have I despaired of God's love for me? Have I sinned, presuming that God would forgive me afterwards? Have God and the pursuit of sanctity in Christ been the goal of my life? Have I denied my faith? Have I placed my trust in false teachings or substitutes for God? Did I despair of God's mercy? Do I accept God's will for me?

2. YOU MUST NOT TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN! Do I use profane language, curse, swear or otherwise misuse God's name? Have I avoided the profane use of God's name in

my speech? Have I talked disrespectfully of God, the saints or sacred things? Have I received Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin? Or out of habit or because everyone else is doing it? Do I keep my promises? Have I wished evil on anyone? Have I broken a solemn vow or promise?

3. YOU MUST KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY! Have I missed Mass deliberately on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Do I show God indifference by not participating well at the Holy Mass? Was I inattentive at, or unnecessarily late for Mass, or did I leave early? Do I go to Confession once a year? Do I fast one hour before receiving Communion? Do I receive Communion during the Easter season? Have I been faithful to sacramental living (Holy Communion and Penance)? Have I done unnecessary work on Sundays? Have I neglected prayer for a long time? Have I helped make my parish community stronger and holier? Have I done penance by abstaining and fasting on obligatory days? Have I been mindful of the poor? Do I donate to the upkeep of the Church?

4. YOU MUST HONOR YOUR PARENTS! Have I respected and obeyed my parents in thought, word and deed, as well as all legitimate superiors (bishop, pastor, teachers, civil authorities)? Have I shown Christlike respect to my spouse and family members? Have I neglected my family responsibilities? Have I been attentive to the religious education and formation of my children? Am I ungrateful?

5. YOU MUST NOT KILL! Have I murdered or deliberately hurt anyone? Do I harbor unjustified anger, hatred or revenge? Have I dallied with the idea of suicide or attempted it? Have I made fun of another person or been abusive in action or speech? Have I used drugs, alcohol or other substances injurious to one's health? Have I put others in danger of the same? Do I eat or drink to excess? Have I engaged in drunkenness? Do I drive recklessly? Have I had an abortion or encouraged or helped someone else to have one? Have I supported in any way abortion, "mercy" killing or suicide? Have I given scandal to anyone by my sins, thereby leading them to sin? Have I deliberately chosen evil? Have I cared for the bodily health and safety of myself and all others?

6. YOU MUST NOT COMMIT ADULTERY! Have I been sexually active with anyone outside of marriage? Masturbated or otherwise actively sought sexual arousal? Have I married without proper permission from the Church? Have I been immodest in dress, looks or gestures? Have I used crude language or told sexually explicit jokes? Have I read or viewed pornography? Did I deliberately look at impure TV, pictures, reading, internet pages? Have I used artificial means of birth control or been sterilized? Have I been chaste in thought and word? Have I used sex only within marriage and while open to procreating life?

7. YOU MUST NOT STEAL! Have I taken property belonging to someone else without returning it or making restitution? Have I illegally copied CD's or computer software? Have I knowingly accepted stolen goods? Have I cheated? Have I damaged someone

else's property or good name without making it good? Have I neglected sharing my material possessions with the poor? Am I guilty of laziness? Do I give God His due? Was I impatient, angry, envious, proud, jealous, revengeful? Have I forgiven others? Have I been just in my responsibilities to employer and employees? Have I stolen anything from another, from my employer, from the government? If so, am I ready to repay it? Did I fulfill my contracts? Did I rashly gamble, depriving my family of necessities? Have I discriminated against others because of race or other reasons?

8. YOU MUST NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS! Have I lied or sworn falsely? Have I gossiped or slandered another person? Have I told an unkind truth about another? Have I repaired, as far as possible, any injury to another's character caused by my lying about him? Have I lied to get out of a bad situation? Have I failed to stand up for someone falsely accused of something? Have I always told the truth? Have I kept secrets and confidences?

9. YOU MUST NOT COVET SOMEONE ELSE'S SPOUSE! Do I encourage and respect the commitment that married couples make to each other? Have I deliberately permitted sexual thoughts or desires about another person to whom I am not married? Do I try to control my imagination?

10. YOU MUST NOT COVET ANOTHER'S POSSESSIONS!

Am I envious of the possessions, talents and successes of others? Do I resent others because of the things they own? Have I acted out of jealousy of someone's gifts or talents? Do I complain about what I don't have? Have I desired to wrongfully take or keep what does not belong to me?

Have I desired what belongs to other people? Have I wished ill on another?

Remember

If you need help—especially if you have been away for some time—simply ask the priest and he will help you by "walking" you through the steps to make a good confession.

During Confession

After examining your conscience and telling God of your sorrow, go into the confessional. You may kneel at the screen or sit to talk face-to-face with the priest. The priest may greet you.

Priest: *May God bless you, that you may make a good confession. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Penitent: *Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. (introduce yourself to the priest; no names; only: age, boy/girl, man/women, married/single) It has been (how long?) since my last confession, and these are my sins: (confess all your sins that you remember.*

Say the sins that you remember. Start with the one(s) that is most difficult to say. (In order to make a good confession the faithful must confess all mortal sins, according to kind and

number.) After confessing all the sins you remember since your last good confession, you may conclude by saying, *"I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life."* . Perhaps the priest will ask you some questions.)

Listen to the words of the priest. He will assign you some penance. Doing the penance will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. When invited, express some prayer of sorrow or Act of Contrition such as:

Penitent: (Pray an Act of Contrition): *O my God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against You, whom I should love above all things. I firmly resolve, with Your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. In His name may God, have mercy on me a sinner. Amen.*

Priest: (gives you absolution – in that very moment God forgives you your sins.)

At the End of Confession

Listen to the words of absolution, the sacramental forgiveness of the Church through the ordained priest.

As you listen to the words of forgiveness you may make the sign of the cross with the priest; enjoy the fact that God has truly freed you from your sins. Thank Him for what He has done for you.)

After Confession

Give thanks to God for forgiving you again. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next Confession.

After Confession, recite or do your penance as soon as possible.

Resolve to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation often. We Catholics are fortunate to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is the ordinary way for us to have our sins forgiven. This sacrament is a powerful help to get rid of our weaknesses, grow in holiness, and lead a balanced and virtuous life. **After confession you will feel much better.**