

Guide to Confession



PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help enlighten your conscience so you may know your sins, be sorry for them, and tell them honestly and sincerely.
- With the Holy Spirit's help, identify your sins (what sins and how often).
- Pray for courage to make a good confession, and prepare to receive the great gift of forgiveness. Remember, Jesus wants what is best for you. He is waiting to forgive you, and welcome you back.

MAKING YOUR CONFESSION

When you arrive at confession, the priest will greet you and both of you will make the Sign of the Cross. You may begin by saying: "Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. It has been (state length of time) since my last confession. These are my sins." Then tell your sins, especially any serious sins. The priest will give the necessary advice and assign penance. Then, you pray the Act of Contrition (see below). It is okay to take the prayer on a piece of paper in with you. You may also say your own Act of Contrition, as long as your prayer mentions that you are sincerely sorry, and that you will try not to commit these sins again. Then the priest will give you absolution (forgiveness). Do your penance as soon as possible.

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all of my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly intend, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

See the next page for an Examination of Conscience.



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The examination of conscience generally takes place before going to individual confession, but can be used at any time to review one's past. The purpose is to call to mind our sins in an orderly fashion (using the Ten Commandments), to best prepare to receive God's forgiveness.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Do I pray daily, and seek to place God as the highest priority in my life?
- Do I seek to surrender myself to God's Word, as taught by the guidance of the Church?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices or witchcraft (ouiji board, tarot cards, fortune telling, horoscopes), which falsely attribute power to anyone or anything else than God?
- Have I received communion knowingly while in a state of mortal sin, without making an effort to go to confession?
- Have I ever purposely withheld a sin from the priest in confession?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- Have I used God's name carelessly? Have I sworn or used foul language?
- Have I told jokes which ridicule God, Mary, or the Saints?
- Have I ever wished or prayed for evil upon someone?

3. Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath.

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or on other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Do I pay attention and participate at Mass, or am I passive and uninvolved?
- Have I tried to keep Sunday as a day of rest and a time for family? Do I do needless work on Sunday?

4. Honor your father and mother.

- Do I do my best to honor and obey my parents, and those in authority in my life?
- Have I ever insulted my father or mother, swearing at them or talking poorly about them to others?
- When I have wronged my parents, do I apologize and admit my failings?
- Have I used tobacco, or drank alcohol against the wishes of my parents?

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to do so?
- Have I abused alcohol or other drugs?
- Have I driven recklessly, possibly putting myself or others at risk?
- Have I harbored feelings of hatred or envy towards others, been resentful or jealous?
- Have I been in any fights (physical or verbal?)

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I respected members of the opposite sex, or have I treated them as objects?
- Do I sincerely seek to be chaste (pure) in my thoughts, words and actions?
- Have I engaged in impure acts by myself (romantic fantasy or masturbation)?
- Have I engaged in sexual touching with another person or had sexual intercourse?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen anything from a store or another person which is not rightfully mine?
- Do I cheat in school, either by copying homework or stealing answers on a test?
- Do I waste time at school or at work, thereby cheating myself or my employer?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Have I lied or deliberately withheld the entire truth to protect myself?
- Have I exaggerated any claims to make myself look better, or to impress my friends?
- Have I gossiped, purposely telling things about someone to harm their good name?
- Do I keep confidential what was told to me in secret, or do I break my word?

9. You shall not covet (desire) your neighbor's wife.

- Have I consented to impure thoughts, not trying to control my imagination?
- Have I looked at pornographic videos, magazines, computer images or stories?
- Have I told impure jokes or stories that would offend God or the dignity of others?

10. You shall not covet (desire) your neighbor's goods.

- Am I jealous of other people's gifts, talents, or possessions? Am I greedy or selfish?
- Am I materialistic? Do I think about the poor? Do I make an effort to reach out to help them?

