

A Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to know your sins.
2. Examine your conscience.
3. Enter confessional and begin by making the sign of the Cross saying:
"Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been (how long?) since my last confession.
4. Continue by confessing your sins, in kind and number, to the best of your ability starting with these or similar words: "These are my sins..."
5. You can let your confessor know you are done by concluding with the words, "I am sorry for these sins and any I may have forgotten."
6. The priest may offer some advice and will assign you your penance. He may then ask you to pray AN ACT OF CONTRITION. In offering this prayer, you are expressing your sorrow for having committed these sins, and your resolve not to commit these sins again, and to avoid the situations that lead to sin.
7. The priest will then speak the words of Absolution.
8. The priest concludes with these or similar words, "Your sins are forgiven, go in peace." And you can respond, "Thanks be to God."
9. After Absolution, pray or perform your penance as soon as possible. It is a good practice to pray an extra prayer for your priest confessor.

An Act of Contrition

O My God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because I have offended you, My God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid all near occasions of sin. Amen.

Words of Absolution

God, the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may

God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Examination of Conscience

I: I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.

- Have I denied the existence of God?
- Does someone or something other than God influence my choices?
- Have I doubted or denied my Faith?
- Have I rejected the Christian faith, associating myself formally with another religion?
- Have I received communion at a non-Catholic service? Have I engaged in superstitious or occult practices?

II. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.

- Have I used the name of God in cursing or blasphemy?
- Have I failed to keep the vows or promises that I have made to God?
- Have I spoken about the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence, hatred or defiance?
- Have I condoned or supported television, movies, or music that treated the church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
- Have I been disrespectful in my behavior in church?

III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Have I set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
- Have I missed Mass on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Did I habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason.
- Have I fasted an hour before receiving Communion? Have I received a sacrament while in the state of serious sin?
- Did I do unnecessary shopping and business on Sunday and the other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Do I do penance every Friday, if not abstaining from meat, then some other form of penance?

-If I am 14 years of age or older, did I abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent?

-If I am between the ages of 18-59, did I fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?

IV. Honor your father and mother.

-If still under the care of my parents, did I obey all that they reasonably asked of me?

-Have I neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?

-Do I live in humble obedience to those who legitimately exercise authority over me?

-Have I provided for the religious education and formation of my children for as long as they are under my care?

-Have I broken the law?

V. You shall not kill.

-Have I intentionally killed a human being?

-Have I procured, performed, cooperated or advised another in the intentional killing of an unborn child through abortion?

-Have I seriously considered or attempted suicide?

-Have I unjustly inflicted bodily harm on another person?

-Have I afflicted another person with verbal or emotional abuse?

-Have I failed to forgive?

-Have I harbored hatred, anger, or resentment?

-Am I prejudiced or have I unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, gender or religion?

-Did I, by my actions, recklessly endanger my life or health, or that of another person?

-Have I gotten drunk or abused other drugs?

-Do I endanger my health by not eating right, or exercising?

-Have I encouraged others to sin by giving scandal?

VI: You shall not commit adultery.

IX: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- Have I committed adultery, having sexual relations with someone who is married, or with someone other than my spouse?
- Have I committed fornication, having sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex when neither of us is married?
- Have I committed sodomy, having sexual relations with someone of the same sex?
- Have I raped someone?
- Have I committed masturbation (impurity with self), using my sexual organs for my own sexual pleasure?
- Have I engaged in sexual foreplay reserved for marriage?
- Have I used artificial means of birth control?
- Have I undergone an operation to render myself sterile for contraceptive purposes?
- Have I willfully entertained impure thoughts?
- Have I purchased or made use of pornography in any form?
- Have I watched movies or television for their improper sexual content?
- Have I listened to music or jokes that are harmful to purity?
- Have I set out to seduce someone, or allowed myself to be seduced?
- Have I made uninvited and unwelcome sexual advances toward another?
- Have I purposely dressed immodestly?
- Am I living in a valid and licit marriage according to the laws of the Catholic Church?
- Have I given scandal by living with a member of the opposite sex without the benefit of marriage?

VII: You shall not steal.

X: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

- Did I take something that doesn't belong to me?
- Did I deface, destroy or lose another's property without making restitution?

- Did I cheat on a test, on my taxes, or in business?
- Do I pay employees a living wage, or fail to give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
- Did I take advantage of another's hardship or ignorance by charging more for a product than it is worth?
- Have I squandered money in compulsive gambling? Am I envious of others on account of their possessions? Have I misused natural resources?
- Do I contribute my time, talents and money to support the poor, my parish, and the work of the Church?

VIII: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Have I deceived another by lying? Did I perjure myself under oath?
- Am I guilty of passing on gossip?
- Am I guilty of detraction, destroying a person's reputation by telling others about his faults for no good reason?
- Am I guilty of slander or calumny, telling lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation?
- Am I guilty of libel, writing lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation?
- Am I guilty of rash judgment, assuming the worst of another person based on circumstantial evidence?
- Have I failed to make reparation for a lie I told, or for what I have done to a person's reputation?
- Did I betray another's confidence through speech?