

A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

Prayer before Confession

O most merciful God! Prostrate at your feet, I implore your forgiveness. I sincerely desire to leave all my evil ways and to confess my sins with all sincerity to you and to your priest. I am a sinner, have mercy on me, O Lord. Give me a lively faith and a firm hope in Your Passion, my Redeemer. Give me, for your mercy's sake a sorrow for having offended so good a God. Mary, my mother, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may make a good confession. Amen.

How to go to Confession

1. Take some time to examine your conscience. Writing things down always helps, especially if it's been awhile. Remember You always have the option to go to confession behind a screen or face to face, if you so desire.
2. After the priest greets you in the name of Christ, make the sign of the cross, after which you say: "Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. I am (tell him your state in life- Married, single, mother, father etc.) These are my sins."
3. Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest to the best of your memory. If it's been a while, don't get too bogged down in specifics. Be precise enough the priest doesn't have to guess what you did, at the same time you don't have to use graphic detail. Kind of sin and general number/circumstance is sufficient. You can also ask the priest for advice or direction.
4. Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then make an Act of Contrition for your sins.
5. The priest will then dismiss you with: "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace." And you respond by saying: "Thanks be to God."
6. Spend some time with God thanking and praising Him for the gift of His mercy. Perform your penance as soon as possible.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, who are all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.

Thanksgiving after Confession

Merciful Lord, with a pure heart I thank you for taking away my sins. Let your Holy Spirit guide my life so that my soul may bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Renew my desire to be your faithful friend and servant, increase my loving dependence on you, and grant me that joy and peace of heart which comes from doing your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. Mary Immaculate Conception, Mother of Mercy, Pray for Me. Amen.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The Ten Commandments

- (1) I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.
- (2) You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain.
- (3) Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
- (4) Honor your father and your mother.
- (5) You shall not kill.
- (6) You shall not commit adultery.
- (7) You shall not steal.
- (8) You shall not lie.
- (9) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
- (10) You shall not covet your neighbor's

Pride

Pride is the mother of all sin. It is a craving for excellence beyond what is reasonable. It makes a person hate being equal to others, and hate being less than God.

- Have I taken the Lord's name in vain or have chosen to hate Him? Have I refused to admit my own weaknesses/ Sins?
Have I dwelt on the failings of others?
Have I judged others, in my thoughts or words?
Have I ranked myself better than others?
Do I despise or prejudice toward others of different race, class or culture?
Have I borne hatred for another?
Have I refused to learn from others?
Have I been stubborn? Refused to admit I was wrong? Refused to accept that another person had a better idea?
Have I obeyed/ respected my parents and those in authority?
Have I been arrogant?
Have I held others in contempt?
Have I joined an organization whose tenants are explicitly contrary to the Catholic Faith? (i.e. Freemasons, Shriners, Wicca etc.)
Have I neglected to use the talents that God has given me?
Have I taken time to rest?
Have I kept the Sabbath holy?

Vanity

Vanity is excessive concern about manifesting my glory before others

- Have I stolen? How much? In what way?
Have I been overly concerned about what others think of me? Have I allowed this to motivate my actions?
Have I lied or exaggerated to make myself look good?
Have I wasted undue time and money on clothes and appearance?
Have I been content with my lowly position, or have I resented the role that Christ asks of me?

Lust

Lust is disordered desire for sexual pleasure, isolated from its procreative and unitive purpose (CCC 2351).

- Custody of the Eyes: "Whoever looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28)
Have I viewed other people as mere sexual objects rather than as persons to be loved?
Pornography: On internet? or TV?
Have I used contraception or do I have a contraceptive mentality?
Have I been divorced and remarried outside of the Church?
Impure Thoughts:
Have I entertained impure thoughts?
Impure Acts:
Alone, or with another?
Sex before marriage?
Adultery?

Anger/Wrath

Anger is undue desire for vengeance -undue in cause or in amount.

- Have I harbored resentment, grudges, and hatred in my thoughts?
Have I nurtured imaginary angry conversations?
Have I been slow to forgive?
Have I lost my temper?
Have I physically or emotionally hurt someone else?
Have I been overly strict with my children (or those under my care) or punished them unnecessarily?
How have I carried my cross?
Have I been impatient with people, family, events, sufferings, sicknesses?
Have I had an abortion?

Covetousness/Avarice

Avarice is the excessive love of possessing things

- Have I been overly concerned about my own comfort and well-being?
Have I been resentful of my lack of money?
Have I been generous in giving? Have I given with a cheerful heart?
Have I cheated, stolen, or failed to pay my bills on time?
Have I used people for my own ends and advantage?
Have I wasted money?

Envy

*Envy -is sadness at the happiness of another
Jealousy-is coveting what belongs to another*

- Have I lied?
Have I envied or been jealous of the abilities, talents, ideas, good-looks, intelligence, clothes, possessions, money, friends, family, of another?
Have I damaged the reputation of another person by my words, attitude, or looks?

Have I repeated accusations that might not be true? Have I exaggerated? Have I lied to hurt someone's reputation? Have I revealed another person's character flaws unnecessarily?

Have I failed to defend the reputation of others?

Have I failed to keep secrets?

Sloth/Apathy

Laziness, especially laziness in the things of God. Sloth is a sorrow in the face of spiritual good -it makes a person lethargic and want to do nothing.

Have I sought God above all else, or have I put other priorities ahead of him? (e.g. friendships, ambition, comfort and ease)
Have I attended Mass each and every Sunday? Have I got so caught up in the things of this world that I've forgotten God?

Have I received Holy Communion while in a state of serious sin?

Have I neglected to seek Confession before Holy Communion?

Have I taken the Lord's name in vain? Or used other foul language?

Have I intentionally risked losing my faith/piety by bad company, bad reading, cowardice, or pride?

Have I trusted God, especially in times of difficulty?

Have I neglected to say my daily prayers?
Have I entertained distractions in prayer, or failed to give God due concentration in prayer or in the Mass?

(Note: Not giving God the effort he deserves in prayer is a sin, but it is not the same thing as mental distractions which are normal.)

Have I been lazy in helping others?

Have I been attentive to the needs of my neighbor, the needs of my family?

Have my conversations been focussed on my own pleasure, or on others?

Has my humor been insensitive to others?

Gluttony

Gluttony is the inordinate use of created goods for pleasure.

Have I gotten drunk on purpose?

Done illegal drugs or abused a prescription?

Have I eaten more than I need?

Have I spent excessive money on food?

Have I driven after drinking?

Have I eaten greedily and with little consideration for the presence and needs of those at table with me?

Have I given money to help the hungry?

Have I regularly practiced fasting and self-denial, especially on Fridays?

Have I always fasted an hour before receiving Holy Communion at Mass?