

Confession in 3 Easy Steps

Step 1: Get ready

Take some time to think about your sins - both those things you've done and should not have and the things you should have done but did not. Use the questions on the reverse of this as a guide to help you remember.

Step 2: Go to confession.

This involves going to see a priest who has been commissioned by Jesus (via the Church) to forgive sins in His name. Remember that he has both heard it all before, and that he will never tell anyone what you share with him in confession. This is what's known as the 'seal of confession,' and it's protected by both Church and civil law. Your time in confession will look something like this:

- A. Begin with the Sign of the Cross: ***In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.***

If you aren't Catholic, let the priest know that you want to talk to him about your sins. He is glad to share his advice with you and to give you a blessing.

- B. Say to the priest: ***Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been ____ days/weeks/months/years since my last confession.***

- C. Tell the priest your sins, sharing (to the best of your memory) what you've done and how often you've done it.

- It is often easier to say the more serious (mortal) sins first.
- Share any sin you may be having a hard time with.
- When you're sharing your sins, make sure you tell him. You can say something like: ***"for these sins, and those I've forgotten, I am truly sorry."***

- D. The priest will give you some advice and assign you a penance. He'll then invite you to pray an act of contrition (a prayer expressing your sorrow to God):

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 intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His Name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

- E. The priest will then pray the prayer of absolution: know that God has truly freed you from all your sins and forgiven you. He will finish by saying "Go in peace." You answer: **Thanks be to God.**

Step 3: Do the penance the priest assigns you:

If it's a prayer of some sort, go into the church or chapel and take a moment to thank God for His mercy & forgiveness. The penance is meant to both help you remember God's love and mercy for you, and to help in the areas you've been struggling. Remember that God loves you tremendously and is glad to forgive your sins.

Examination of Conscience – Fear and the Seven Deadly Sins

(adapted from Fr. Michael “Catfish” Mireau)

What is a sin?

When Jesus is asked what the greatest or most important commandment is in the law, He answers simply to “...**love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind**” and to “...love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-38). We talk about those moments we fail to love God or to love neighbor as ‘sin.’ According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1871), “**sin is an utterance** (something you say), **a deed** (something you do), **or a desire contrary to the eternal law.**”

In the tradition of the Church, we call seven sins “deadly” because these are they tend to lead us to other sins. These are **wrath, greed, lust, sloth, gluttony, envy, and pride**. The questions below don’t cover every detail of every way you may have chosen these sins, but represent a good starting point for confession.

Wrath (Anger)

- When I am frightened, frustrated, and my control is taken away from me, do I hold on to my anger so that I might regain my sense of control? Does my rage destroy property (things), or life, or relationships?
- Am I afraid – to be weak, to be vulnerable, to be powerless?

Greed

- Do I seek money or power so I may control my own destiny? Do things matter more to me than other people do?
- Am I afraid – to give up control and to trust God?

Lust

- Do I use others for my own needs and wants? Do I forget the feelings of people around me? Do I demean the dignity of the body (my body or others’ body) by turning it into an object of fantasy? Do I demean the gift of loving intimacy by turning them into means of immediate pleasure?
- Am I afraid – to take the risk of loving and trusting others?

Sloth (Laziness)

- Do I use the gifts God has given me to serve him and his people, or do I act as though I have nothing to offer? Do I leave my responsibilities to others? Do I forget to be thankful, and to show my thanks through loving service?
- Am I afraid – to risk my gifts, and so, instead do nothing?

Gluttony (Waste)

- Am I satisfied with what I have? Do I feel the need to satisfy every desire as fast as I can? Do I forget the needs of others?
- Am I afraid – to be hungry, and to let God feed me?

Envy

- Am I thankful for what God has given me, and for what God has made me, or am I jealous of others? Do I rejoice in the gifts and in the happiness of others, or am I threatened by them?
- Am I afraid – that God loves others more than he loves me?

Pride

- Do I put myself at the center of all my thoughts and decisions? Do I look down on others? Do I judge people? Do I put others down so that I may feel better about myself?
- Am I afraid – to be a child of God, who trusts that God loves me, simply because I am his child?