

How to Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation

A. Prepare for Confession.

Pray to the Holy Spirit for self-knowledge and trust in the mercy of God. Examine your conscience (use the back of this page as a guideline), be truly sorry for your sins, and choose (resolve) to make changes in the areas where you struggle.

B. Go to a priest for Confession.

- 1) *Go to the priest and begin with the Sign of the Cross. Welcoming you, the priest may say something like: "May God, Who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy." You answer: **Amen.***
- 2) *Then say: **Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been weeks/ months/years since my last confession, and these are my sins:***

[Confess your sins openly and candidly. Tell the priest of all your sins and how often you've committed them. Don't worry, he's not going to judge you or tell anyone else what you've shared. Church law forbids it, and civil law protects the seal of confession.] When you're done, express that you are sorry for your sins by saying something like this:

I am truly sorry and ask God's forgiveness for all of my sins, those I have confessed as well as any that I have forgotten.

- 3) *[Then listen to the priest for whatever advice he may judge appropriate. If you have any question about the faith, how to grow in holiness, or whether something is a sin, feel free to ask him. Then the priest will assign you a penance – prayers or actions to help remedy the places you've fallen short.]*
- 4) Pray the Act of Contrition when the priest prompts you to do so:

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.

- 5) *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.***

C. Do the penance the priest assigns you: it's meant to help open you to God's grace, and sometimes is done to help you build virtue in the areas with which you are struggling.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

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

- Do I try to love God with my whole heart? Do I put anything or anyone above God? Do I pray daily?
- Have I denied a truth of the faith out of concern for the respect or opinion of others?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices? (things like horoscopes, the occult, witchcraft, wicca, ouija boards, séances, tarot cards, new age crystals, fortune telling, and palm reading.)
- Have I received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?
- Have I abused the Sacrament of Penance by lying to the priest or deliberately not confessing a mortal sin?

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

- Have I used God's holy name in vain: lightly or carelessly? Have I been angry with God?
- Have I mocked God, the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, or sacred places or things?

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

- Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest, and relaxation, avoiding unnecessary work?
- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Day of Obligations?
- Have I deliberately come late or left early from Mass without a good reason?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- Do I honor, respect, and obey my parents?
- Do I support and care for the well-being of all family members?
- Have I neglected family duties? Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives?
- Do I honor and obey those in authority over me? (teachers, employers, law enforcement, priests, etc.)

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I deliberately harmed anyone?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
- Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it? Have I abused drugs or alcohol?
- Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?
- Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization or contraception?
- Have I wished evil upon another person?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I deliberately viewed pornographic magazines, videos or internet websites?
- Have I engaged in sexual activity with anyone of either sex? Have I masturbated?
- Have I used impure language or told impure jokes? Do I dress modestly?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods? Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Have I deliberately destroyed the property of others?
- Have I cheated anyone of what I owe? Do I waste time at work, school or at home?
- Do I gamble excessively, thereby denying my family of their needs?
- Do I share what I have with the poor and the Church according to my means?
- Have I pirated digital materials?

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

- Have I lied? Have I made promises I didn't intend to keep?
- Have I plagiarized or been academically dishonest?
- Have I gossiped? Have I spoken behind someone else's back?
- Have I revealed secrets or confidential information without good reason?
- Have I ruined the good name of others by spreading lies or maliciously revealing their faults and sins?

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- Have I consented to impure thoughts? Have I caused them by impure reading, conversations or curiosity?
- Have I watched shows, plays, pictures or movies that contain impure scenes with the intention of being aroused by them?
- Do I guard my imagination and senses? Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- Am I envious of the possessions, abilities, talents, beauty, or success of others?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life? Am I greedy or selfish?