



Your guide to a good confession

## BEFORE CONFESSION

A good confession requires preparation through prayer and reflection.

**Pray.** Find a place in the Church, kneel down, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you make a good confession in these or similar words: “**Loving Jesus, I desire to make a good Confession. Help me to know my sins, to be truly sorry for them, and to be determined not to sin again. Have mercy on me, O Lord, and forgive me. Mary, my Mother, pray for me.**”

**Examine Your Conscience.** After praying, spend time examining your conscience for sin using the *Examination of Conscience* on the back cover. When we go to confession, we must mention all serious (mortal) sins of which we are aware in name (the name of the sin) and number (the number of times we have committed it). Mortal sin is any sin is seriously contrary to the ten commandments and which is done freely and knowingly. It is also beneficial to mention any venial sins of which we are aware. If you think you might forget what you want to confess, feel free to bring a written list with you. You could use the ‘Note’ app on your phone or a piece of paper. Just be sure to destroy or delete the note after your confession.

**Behind a Screen or Face to Face?** You may have the choice of confessing your sins kneeling behind a screen or sitting face to face with the priest. Both options are legitimate and offer different benefits. Confessing behind a screen safeguards your anonymity, and it can also remind you that you’re approaching Jesus Christ and confiding in the Lord himself through the priest. Speaking behind a screen is not a *natural* thing to do, but then again, confession isn’t natural. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is profoundly supernatural, because the priest acts *in persona Christi*—in the person of Christ. The posture of kneeling also reflects the way we are approaching God in the Sacrament. On the other hand, you might prefer a face to face encounter if you’d appreciate some human reassurance. If this option is available, there will usually be a chair for you near the priest.

**Still Unsure?** If you do not know how to confess your sins, or if you feel uneasy, ask the priest to assist you. He will help you make a good confession. Answer his questions simply, without hiding anything out of shame or fear. Place your trust in God.

## AFTER CONFESSION

**Pray.** Find a place in the Church, kneel down, and give thanks to God for forgiving your sins. You could use this prayer: “**Merciful Jesus, thank you for helping me to make a good Confession and for taking away my sins. Help me, dear Jesus, never to offend you again. Mary, my Mother, pray to Jesus for me. My dear guardian angel, help me. Amen.**”

**Complete Your Penance.** Complete the penance assigned to you by the priest as soon as possible. If your penance is a prayer, pray it before leaving the Church. Your penance diminishes the temporal punishment due you for your sins and re-establishes you in friendship with God.

**Go to Confession Regularly.** The Church directs us to confess serious sins once a year, but an annual confession is the bare minimum. A monthly confession is commendable; those who really wish to grow in virtue and holiness might consider fortnightly or weekly confession.

## DURING CONFESSION

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips that you may confess your sins with true sorrow.

**You: Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been** *(state the weeks, months, or years)* **since my last confession. These are my sins...**

*Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these words:*

**For these and all my sins I am sorry.**

*The priest may give you some advice and will then assign you a penance. The penance might be a prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. You must complete your penance as soon as possible after confession.*

Priest: For your penance...

Now make your Act of Contrition.

**You: 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 Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for me. In his name, my God, have mercy.**

Priest: 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.

**You: Amen.**

Priest: May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, whatever good you do or suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

**You: Thanks be to God.**

# EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

**1) I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me.** Did I fail to love God, to make God first in my life, to thank Him, trust Him, love Him as He deserves? Did I fail to pray? Have I doubted or denied my faith? Was I careless in saying my prayers? Do I give God time everyday in prayer? Do I make a god out of my work, my possessions, or my image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God? Am I angry toward God because of illness or misfortune? Have I been involved with magic, horoscopes, Ouija boards, fortune telling, dream-catchers?

**2) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.** Have I cursed or sworn? Have I used God's name or other holy names in vain? Have I used crass language or jokes? In conversation, have I passively listened to slander and jokes demeaning the Church or God's authority?

**3) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.** Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I left Mass early without a good reason? Have I been to Holy Communion at least once a year? Have I received Holy Communion in the state of serious sin? Have I been to confession regularly? Have I allowed myself to become so dominated by my work and chores that I have not set aside Sunday for spiritual and family activities?

**4) Honour your father and your mother.** Have I honoured and obeyed my parents? Have I respected my siblings? Have I respected those with lawful authority? Have I failed to help at home or to spend time with my family? Do I blame my parents for my own shortcomings?

**5) You shall not kill.** Did I give in to feelings of anger or jealousy? Did I keep hatred in my heart? Have I ever struck anyone in anger, intending to injure the person? Did I fight, give a bad example or cause scandal? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I had or in any way permitted or encouraged abortion? Have I thought about suicide? Have I killed someone? Have I killed someone with gossip or by what I said? Have I procured an abortion or encouraged someone to procure one? Have I used abortifacient contraceptives? Have I used IVF? Have I encouraged someone to seek euthanasia?

**6) You shall not commit adultery.** Did I consent to impure glances, passionate kisses, or sinful touches? Was I immodest in dress or behaviour? Did I look at pornography, impure books, magazines or videos? Am I guilty of impurity through masturbation? Have I engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage? If I am married, have I used contraceptives? Do I carefully avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness and the occasions of impurity?

**7) You shall not steal.** Have I stolen what is not mine? What or how much? Did I return it or make up for what I have stolen? Have I cheated on tests or homework? Did I waste time at work? Have I been extravagant in my manner of life, to the neglect of the poor at home and abroad?

**8) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.** Have I lied, gossiped? Talked about another person behind their back? Do I always tell the truth? Am I sincere? Did I reveal secrets that should have been kept confidential? In any of my previous confessions, did I lie to or deliberately conceal something from the priest? Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my talk? Have I injured the reputation of others by speaking about their failures and sins with little desire or intention to help them? Have I condoned prejudice and hatred toward people of other nationalities, races or religions?

**9) You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.** Have I consented to impure thoughts? Have I encouraged them by stares, curiosity or impure conversations? Did I neglect to control my imagination or desire of other people? Have I rejected my family in my heart, wishing to distance myself emotionally and personally from them?

**10) You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.** Is my heart greedy? Am I jealous of what another person has? Am I envious of others because I don't have what they have? Do I habitually compare myself with others? Am I moody or gloomy? Do I work, study and keep busy to counter idle thoughts? Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my thoughts of others? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the treasures in Heaven?