

A Guide to Making an EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE and a Good Confession

Preparing for Confession

- Find a quiet place to pray and think.
- Ask the Holy Spirit in prayer to help you remember your sins.
- Use the questions below as a guide.
- Remember to include sins of omission—that is, things you *should have* done but did not.

Examination of Conscience

First, consider how well you have kept the Ten Commandments.

First Commandment

“I am the lord your God. ... You shall have no other gods before me.” – Exodus 20:2-3

- Do I put other things, activities, or people before God?
- Have I spent time with God each day in prayer?
- Do I accept all of God’s teaching or just the parts I find convenient?
- Have I practiced or engaged in occult practices, such as consulting horoscopes, tarot cards, fortune telling, or “Ouija” boards?
- Have I denied my faith in any ways?
- Have I ever received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?

Second Commandment

“You shall not take the name of the lord your God in vain.” – Exodus 20:7

- Do I always show respect and reverence for God’s name?
- Have I used God’s name as a curse, out of anger, or in a careless way?
- Have I irreverently spoken about God or about any sacred person, place, or thing?
- Have I done my best to fulfill any promises in which I invoked God’s name (oaths)?

Third Commandment

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” – Exodus 20:8

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation without just cause (for example, a serious illness)?
- Do I actively and fully participate at Mass?
- Have I carelessly arrived late or left early from Mass without a serious reason?
- Have I kept the Eucharistic fast before Mass (i.e., no food or drink—except water—for one hour before receiving Holy Communion)?

Fourth Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother.” – Exodus 20:12

- Have I failed to show love and respect to my parents?
- Have I lied to, deceived, or disobeyed them?
- Have I gotten angry, talked back, or used profanity at them?
- Have I failed to be grateful for the sacrifices they have made for my family?
- Have I fulfilled all the duties and responsibilities I have toward my parents and family?
- Have I been critical of them to others?
- Do I respect and obey others who have a legitimate role of authority in my life?

Fifth Commandment

“You shall not kill.” – Exodus 20:13

- Have I killed or harmed someone physically, mentally, or verbally?
- Am I harming myself (and setting a bad example for others) by taking drugs or abusing alcohol?
- Have I harmed someone through insults or bullying?
- Have I mutilated or harmed my body?
- Have I tried to commit suicide?
- Did I have an abortion?
- Have I encouraged, helped, or in any way participated in someone else’s abortion?
- Have I easily lost my temper or shown anger toward someone?
- Have I fostered a grudge or failed to forgive another?

Sixth and Ninth Commandments

“You shall not commit adultery.” – Exodus 20:14

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” – Exodus 20:17

- Do I treat the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, respecting the sexual dignity of others and myself?
- Have I willfully engaged in impure thoughts or desires?
- Have I looked at pornographic images or videos?
- Have I watched impure TV shows or movies?
- Have I committed impure acts by myself (i.e., committed the sin of masturbation)?
- Have I committed impure acts with another or led others to commit impure acts?
- Have I dressed or acted immodestly, possibly leading others to sin?
- Have I practiced any form of contraception?

Seventh and Tenth Commandments

“You shall not steal.” – Exodus 20:15

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.” – Exodus 20:17

- Have I stolen anything or helped or encouraged anyone else to steal?
- If I have stolen something, have I made restitution to its owner?
- Have I damaged another’s property without acknowledging and making restitution?
- Have I been greedy or overly attached to the things of the world?
- Have I carelessly wasted time at home, at school, or at work?
- Have I failed to help others—especially the poor—by neglecting to share what I have?
- Have I honored my debts?

Eighth Commandment

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” – Exodus 20:16

- Have I lied?
- Have I revealed the faults of others without just cause?
- Have I gossiped about others?
- Have I failed to honor a confidence or secret entrusted to me?
- Have I damaged another’s reputation through lies or accusations?
- Have I failed to defend someone’s good name?

The Seven Deadly Sins and the Opposite Virtues

Am I guilty of any of the following sins? Consider how you can grow in the opposing virtue. (See CCC 1866.)

<u>Sin</u>	<u>Virtue</u>	<u>Sin</u>	<u>Virtue</u>
1. Pride	Humility	5. Gluttony	Temperance
2. Greed	Generosity	6. Envy	Kindness
3. Lust	Chastity	7. Sloth	Diligence (Persistence)
4. Anger	Patience (Meekness)		

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

By considering the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy we can remember times we may have committed sins of omission. We can also be reminded of ways in which we can grow in holiness. Have I neglected to do the following when circumstances obliged me?

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Comfort the sorrowful.
5. Bear wrongs patiently.
6. Forgive all injuries.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

The Corporal Works of Mercy

Have I neglected to do the following when circumstances obliged me?

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

Mortal Sins Must Be Confessed

You are only obligated to confess mortal sins, although confession of venial sins is very helpful in receiving the grace to avoid sin in the future and for advancing in holiness.

For a sin to be *mortal*, three conditions must be met (in bold): “Mortal sin is sin whose **object is grave matter** and which is also **committed with full knowledge** and **deliberate consent.**” (CCC 1857; emphasis added)

Steps to a Good Confession

1. Examine your conscience.
2. Be repentant of your sins.
3. Confess your sins to the priest in number and kind, being sure to confess all mortal sins.
4. Make an act of contrition, receive absolution from the priest, and resolve to sin no more.
5. Do the penance the priest gives you.

How to Go to Confession

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross.
- Then say, “Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ days/weeks/months/years since my last confession.”
- Tell the priest your sins and how many times you committed each (to the best of your memory), beginning with any mortal sins and any sins you are particularly struggling with.
- The priest will give you some advice and assign you a penance.
- You then make the Act of Contrition.
- The priest will give you absolution and then dismiss you.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all of my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they have offended 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, to do penance, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.