

How To Go To Confession

(take this sheet with you... it's okay, really)

Before You Go...

Examine your conscience, that is, reflect on what sins you have committed. To guide you, just Google "examination of conscience" and you'll find many resources to help you. It's even alright to **make a list** to bring with you to confession if that helps.

1. Introduction. When you come before the priest, begin by making the **Sign of the Cross** (praying the words out loud), and continue by saying,

"Bless me, Father, I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession. These are my sins..."

2. Confession. List the sins you have committed that came to mind when doing your examination of conscience. **Don't be too general** (like, "I haven't been a good person"), but a lot of **detail is not necessary** either (you don't need to tell the whole story of how a sin came about). If you're not sure if something is a sin is, just ask the priest. This isn't counseling, so unless you ask, the priest likely won't give you advice. He'll just move on to...

3. Penance. The priest will suggest **something for you to do or pray** as a response to God's mercy. You'll have to remember what this is and do it after the confession is over, so pay attention.

4. Contrition. The priest will then ask you to pray your "Act of Contrition," demonstrating your sorrow for your sins. This needs to be prayed out loud for the priest to hear, but need not adhere exactly to one formula. Here are two examples (choose the one that suits you best) :

ACT OF CONTRITION

*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.*

OR:

*O my God, I am heartily sorry
for having offended you and I detest all my sins,
because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell;
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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.*

5. Absolution. Don't get up to leave after that prayer, because the best part is yet to come: the priest will extend his hands in your direction and he will pray the **Prayer of Absolution**: "*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 grant 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. Amen.*"

You respond: Amen.

6. Conclusion. The priest will then likely say something like, "God has freed you from your sin. Go in Peace." To which you can respond: "**Thanks be to God.**"

After You Leave...

Don't forget to **do your penance**. If it is saying certain prayers, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.

First Commandment: I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord and Him only shall you serve.

Have I...

1. Disobeyed the commandments of God or the Church?
2. Refused to accept what God has revealed as true, or what the Catholic Church believes?
3. Denied the existence of God?
4. Nourished and protected my faith?
5. Deliberately misled others about doctrine or the faith?
6. Rejected the Catholic faith?
7. Joined a group forbidden to Catholics (ex: Freemasons)
8. Despaired about my salvation or the forgiveness of my sins?
9. Presumed on God's mercy? (Committing a sin in expectation of forgiveness)
10. Loved someone or something more than God (money, power, sex, ambition, etc.)?
11. Let someone or something influence my choices more than God?
12. Engaged in superstitious practices? (Ex. horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc.)
13. Been involved in the occult? (Seances, ouija board, worship of Satan, etc.)
14. Hidden a serious sin or told a lie in confession?

Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have I...

1. Used the name of God carelessly?
2. Failed to keep vows or promises that I have made to God?
3. Spoken about the Faith, the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence?
4. Engaged in media that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
5. Used vulgar, suggestive or obscene speech?
6. Belittled others in my speech?
7. Behaved disrespectfully in Church?
8. Misused places or things set apart for the worship of God?
9. Committed perjury? (Breaking an oath or lying under oath.)
10. Blamed God for my failings?

Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Have I...

1. Set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
2. Missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days (through own fault w/o sufficient reason)?
3. Committed a sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament?
4. Received a sacrament while in the state of mortal sin?
5. Habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason?
6. Shopped, done labor, or do business unnecessarily on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
7. Not taken my children to Mass?
8. Knowingly eaten meat on a day of abstinence (or not fasting on a fast day)?
9. Eaten or drank within one hour of receiving Communion (other than medical need)?

Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.

Have I...

1. Obeyed all that my parents reasonably asked of me?
2. Neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
3. Obeyed the reasonable demands of my teachers?
4. Neglected to give my children proper food, clothing, shelter, education, discipline and care?
5. Provided for the religious education and formation of my children?
6. Ensured that my children, frequent the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion?
7. Educated my children in a way that corresponds to my religious convictions?
8. Provided my children with education in the Catholic teaching on human sexuality?
9. Been to my children a good example of how to live the Catholic Faith?
10. Prayed with and for my children?
11. Lived in humble obedience to those who legitimately exercise authority over me?
12. Broken the law?
13. Supported or voted for a politician who opposes the teachings of Christ and Catholic Church?

Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.

Have I...

1. Unjustly and intentionally killed or desired to kill a human being?
2. Been involved in an abortion, directly or indirectly (through advice, etc.)?

3. Seriously considered or attempted suicide?
4. Supported, promoted or encouraged the practice of assisted suicide or mercy killing?
5. Unjustly inflicted or threatened bodily harm on another person?
6. Verbally or emotionally abused another person with words of hatred?
7. Been prejudiced, or unjustly discriminated against others?
8. Purposely provoked another by teasing or nagging?
9. Recklessly endangered my life or health, or that of another, by my actions, alcohol use, or nutrition?
10. Used, sold or given drugs to others to use for non-therapeutic purposes?
11. Encouraged others to sin by not living out the teachings of Christ and the Church?
12. Helped another to commit a mortal sin (through advice, driving them somewhere, etc.)?
13. Caused serious injury or death by criminal neglect?
14. Indulged in serious anger?
15. Been unforgiving to others, when mercy or pardon was requested?
16. Delighted to see someone else get hurt or suffer?
17. Treated animals cruelly, causing them to suffer or die needlessly?

Sixth & Ninth Commandments: You shall not commit adultery. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Have I...

1. Practiced the virtue of chastity in dress, speech, thoughts, actions?
2. Lusted after another person?
3. Used an artificial means of birth control including IUD's, sterilization, pills, patches, injections, etc.
4. Refused to be open to conception, without just cause?
5. Participated in immoral techniques for conception (in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination)?
6. Deprived or forced the marital right?
7. Deliberately caused male climax outside of normal sexual intercourse? (Catechism, 2366)
8. Purchased, viewed, or made use of pornography?
9. Listened to music or jokes that are harmful to purity?
10. Committed adultery, incest, rape, fornication, or homosexual activity?
11. Masturbated? (Deliberate stimulation of one's own sexual organs for pleasure.)
12. Engaged in sexual foreplay outside of marriage?
13. Preyed upon children or youth for sexual pleasure?
14. Engaged in unnatural sexual activities?
15. Engaged in prostitution, or paid for the services of a prostitute?
16. Seduced someone, permitted seduction?
17. Made uninvited and unwelcome sexual advances toward another?

Seventh & Tenth Commandments: You shall not steal. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Have I...

1. Stolen? (Take something that doesn't belong to me against the reasonable will of the owner.)
2. Envied others on account of their possessions?
3. Given generously to others in need and used my possessions for the good of others?
4. Freed myself from a consumer mentality?
5. Practiced the works of mercy?
6. Deliberately defaced, destroyed or lost another's property?
7. Cheated on a test, taxes, sports, games, insurance, or in business?
8. Squandered money in compulsive gambling?
9. Not paid employees a living wage, or failed to give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
10. Failed to honor a contract or debt?
11. Overcharge someone, especially to take advantage of another's hardship or ignorance?
12. Misused natural resources?

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I...

3. Lied or gossiped and not made reparation for the damage done?
4. Knowingly and willfully deceived another?
5. Perjured myself under oath?
6. Committed detraction? (Destroying a person's reputation in telling others their faults)?
7. Committed slander or calumny? (Telling lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation.)
8. Committed libel? (Writing lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation.)
9. Been guilty of rash judgment?
10. Failed to speak out in defense of the Catholic Faith, the Church, or of another person?
11. Betrayed another's confidence through speech?