

An Adult's Guide for Confession

6 STEPS FOR A GOOD CONFESSION

1. Examine your conscience - what sins have you committed since your last good confession.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Confess your sins to the priest.
4. Make certain that you confess all your mortal sins and how often you have committed them.
5. After your confession, do the penance the priest gives to you.

1. Examination of Conscience

FIRST COMMANDMENT

"I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before Me." (Ex 20:2,3)

- Did I doubt or deny that God exists?
- Did I refuse to believe what God has revealed to us?
- Did I believe in fortune telling, horoscopes, dreams, the occult, good-luck charms, tarot cards, palmistry, Ouija boards, seances, reincarnation?
- Did I deny that I was Catholic?
- Did I leave the Catholic Faith?
- Did I give time to God each day in prayer?
- Did I love God with my whole heart?
- Did I despair of or presume on God's mercy?
- Did I have false gods in my life that I gave greater attention to than God, like money, profession, drugs, TV, fame, pleasure, property, etc.?

SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain." (Ex 20:7)

- Did I blaspheme or insult God?
- Did I take God's name carelessly or uselessly?
- Did I curse, or break an oath or vow?
- Did I get angry with God?

THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Remember that you keep holy the Sabbath Day." (Ex 20:8)

- Did I miss Mass Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation through my own fault?
 - Did I come to Mass on time? Leave early?
 - Did I do work on Sunday that was not necessary?
 - Did I set aside Sunday as a day of rest and a family day?
 - Did I show reverence in the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament?
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FOURTH COMMANDMENT
"Honor your father and your mother." (Ex 20:12)

- Did I disobey or disrespect my parents or legitimate superiors?
- Did I neglect my duties to my husband, wife, children or parents?
- Did I neglect to give good religious example to my family?
- Did I fail to actively take an interest in the religious education and formation of my children?
- Did I fail to educate myself on the true teachings of the Church?
- Did I give scandal by what I said or did, especially to the young?
- Did I cause anyone to leave the faith?
- Did I cause tension and fights in my family?
- Did I care for my aged and infirm relatives?
- Did I give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
- Did I give a fair wage to my employees?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT
"You shall not kill." (Ex 20:13)

- Did I kill or physically injure anyone?
- Did I have an abortion, or advise someone else to have an abortion? (One who procures and abortion is automatically excommunicated, as is anyone who is involved in an abortion, Canon 1398. The excommunication will be lifted in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)
- Did I use or cause my spouse to use birth control pills (whether or not realizing that birth control pills do abort the fetus if and when conceived)?
- Did I attempt suicide?
- Did I take part in or approve of "mercy killing" (euthanasia)?
- Did I get angry, impatient, envious, unkind, proud, revengeful, jealous, hateful toward another, lazy?
- Did I give bad example by drug abuse, drinking alcohol to excess, fighting, quarreling?
- Did I abuse my children?

SIXTH COMMANDMENT
"You shall not commit adultery." (Ex 20:14) "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." (Ex 20:17)

*Note: In the area of deliberate sexual sins listed below, all are **mortal** sins if there is sufficient reflection and full consent of the will. "No fornicators, idolaters, or adulterers, no sodomites will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 6:9-10) "Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts." (Mt 5:28)*

- Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or desires?
- Did I use impure or suggestive words? Tell impure stories? Listen to them?
- Did I deliberately look at impure TV, videos, plays, pictures or movies? Or deliberately read impure materials?
- Did I commit impure acts by myself (masturbation)?
- Did I commit impure acts with another - fornication (premarital sex), adultery (sex with a married person)?
- Did I practice artificial birth control (by pills, device, withdrawal)?
- Did I marry or advise anyone to marry outside the Church?
- Did I avoid the occasions of impurity?
- Did I try to control my thoughts?

- Did I engage in homosexual activity?
- Did I respect all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Did I or my spouse have sterilization done?
- Did I abuse my marriage rights?

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

"You shall not steal." (Ex 20:15) "You shall not covet your neighbor's goods." (Ex 20:17)

- Did I steal, cheat, help or encourage others to steal or keep stolen goods? Have I made restitution for stolen goods?
- Did I fulfill my contracts; give or accept bribes; pay my bills; rashly gamble or speculate; deprive my family of the necessities of life?
- Did I waste time at work, school or at home?
- Did I envy other people's families or possessions?
- Did I make material possessions the purpose of my life?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex 20:16)

- Did I lie?
- Did I deliberately deceive others, or injure others by lies?
- Did I commit perjury?
- Did I gossip or reveal others' faults or sins?
- Did I fail to keep secret what should be confidential?

OTHER SINS

- Did I fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?
- Did I eat meat on the Fridays of Lent or Ash Wednesday?
- Did I keep Fridays of the year as penitential days?
- Did I fail to receive Holy Communion during Eastertime?
- Did I go to Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin?
- Did I go to Holy Communion without fasting for one hour from food and drink (water and medicine permitted)?
- Did I make an intentionally incomplete confession?
- Did I fail to contribute to the support of the Church?

The Sin of Sacrilege

"Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the Body and Blood of the Lord. ... He who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body eats and drinks judgement on himself." (1 Cor 11:27-29) Therefore, to receive Holy Communion while in the state of mortal sin (having committed a mortal sin which has not been confessed and forgiven in the Sacrament of Confession) is itself a mortal sin - a mortal sin of sacrilege.

2. Become sorry for your sins

For sins to be forgiven, the penitent must possess contrition for his/her sins. Contrition is the state of being sorry for one's sins. There are two types of contrition – perfect and imperfect. Imperfect contrition is feeling sorrow because of the way that your sin has affected you (perhaps this might be worry about being caught, fear of consequences, etc.). Perfect contrition is feeling sorrow because of the way that your sin has affected God. We desire to achieve perfect contrition, but usually start with imperfect contrition.

3. Confess your sins to a priest

Find out when confessions are scheduled (this website gives you that information for Holy Family Parish), or contact a priest and make an appointment. Enter the confessional (or reconciliation room) and kneel behind the screen or sit face-to-face with the priest. Begin by making the sign of the cross, saying, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (length of time) since my last confession, and these are my sins." Then tell the priest all your sins, their type and how often you've committed each one. When you've finished, say, "That is all I remember, Father." The priest may then offer you counsel or ask questions; please try to answer him as completely and honestly as you are able. He will then assign you a "penance" – usually a prayer or prayers. Once you have accepted your penance, pray the "Act of Perfect Contrition."

ACT OF PERFECT CONTRITION

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.

The priest will then pray the prayer of absolution over you; when he finishes by blessing you, again make the sign of the cross. When you leave the confessional or reconciliation room, do your penance as soon as possible.

Sacred Scripture on Sins and Forgiveness

"O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." (Lk 18:13)

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven..." (Jn 20:23)

"Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall become white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall become white as wool." (Is 1:18)

"If we confess our sins, He who is upright can be depended upon to forgive sins, and to cleanse us from every wrong." (1 Jn 1:9)

"Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." (Lk 23:34)

"Forgive us our sins, for we too forgive all who do us wrong." (Lk 11:4)