

How to Go to Confession...

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

—*Rite of Penance*, no. 93

- 1 PREPARATION:** Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26).
- 2 GREETING:** The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.
- 3 THE SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [*give days, months, or years*] since my last confession.”
- 4 CONFESSION:** 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 or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”
- 5 PENANCE:** The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

- 6 ACT OF CONTRITION:** After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

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.

(*Rite of Penance*, no. 45)

- 7 ABSOLUTION:** The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”
- 8 PRAISE:** The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (*Rite of Penance*, no. 47).
- 9 DISMISSAL:** The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

If it has been a while since your last confession, remember, “Do not fear” (Is 41:10). The priest will help guide you. And feel free to take this how-to guide with you! (For more information, visit www.usccb.org/confession.)

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USCCB
COMMUNICATIONS

Publication No. 7-412
Washington, DC
ISBN 978-1-60137-412-7

ISBN 978-1-60137-412-7



God's Gift of Forgiveness

A Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“Peace be with you!” With these words, the Risen Lord greeted his frightened Apostles in the Upper Room on the day of his Resurrection. They were troubled, anxious, and fearful—much like each one of us at some point in our lives. Christ repeated the words, “Peace be with you.” But then he added, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them” (Jn 20:19-23).

What an extraordinary gift! The Risen Lord was proclaiming that all the suffering he had just endured was in order to make available the gifts of salvation and forgiveness. He wanted the Apostles to receive these gifts. He wanted them to become apostles of this forgiveness to others.

In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to grant forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. In this sacrament, he prepares us to receive him free from serious sin, with a lively faith, earnest hope, and sacrificial love in the Eucharist. The Church sees confession as so important that she requires that every Catholic go at least once a year.¹ The Church also encourages frequent confession in order to grow closer to Christ Jesus and his Body, the Church. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we seek forgiveness and repentance, let go of patterns

of sin, grow in the life of virtue, and witness to a joyful conversion. Since the graces of the sacrament are so similar to the purpose of the New Evangelization, Pope Benedict XVI has said, “The New Evangelization . . . begins in the confessional!”²

We bishops and priests are eager to help you if you experience difficulty, hesitation, or uncertainty about approaching the Lord in this sacrament. If you have not received this healing sacrament in a long time, we are ready to



welcome you. We, whom Christ has ordained to minister this forgiveness in his name, are also approaching this sacrament, as both penitents and ministers, throughout our lives and at this special moment of grace during Lent. We want to offer ourselves to you as forgiven sinners seeking to serve in the Lord's name.

During Lent—in addition to the various penitential services during which individual confession takes place—we bishops and priests will be making ourselves available often for the individual celebration of this sacrament. We pray that through the work of the Holy Spirit, all Catholics—clergy and laity—will respond to the call of the New Evangelization to encounter Christ in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Come to the Lord and experience the extraordinary grace of his forgiveness!

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1457-1458.

² Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Annual Course on the Internal Forum Organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120309_penitenzieria-apostolica_en.html.

FAITH
WORSHIP
WITNESS



JOURNEY
WITH CHRIST



CHRIST OUR LORD SAYS: BE PERFECT AS YOUR FATHER IS PERFECT.

Where is my life really leading me? Is the hope of eternal life my inspiration? Have I tried to grow in the life of the Spirit through prayer, reading the Word of God and meditating on it, receiving the sacraments, self-denial? Have I been anxious to control my vices, my bad inclinations and passions, e.g., envy, love of food and drink? Have I been proud and boastful, thinking myself better in the sight of God and despising others as less important than myself? Have I imposed my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights?

What use have I made of time, of health and strength, of the gifts God has given me to be used like the talents in the Gospel? Do I use them to become more perfect every day? Or have I been lazy and too much given to leisure?

Have I been patient in accepting the sorrows and disappointments of life? How have I performed mortification so as to fill up what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ? Have I kept the precept of fasting and abstinence?

Have I kept my senses and my whole body pure and chaste as a temple of the Holy Spirit consecrated for resurrection and glory, and as a sign of God's faithful love for men and women, a sign that is seen most perfectly in the sacrament of matrimony? Have I dishonored my body by fornication, impurity, unworthy conversation or thoughts, evil desires or actions? Have I given in to sensuality? Have I indulged in reading, conversation, shows, and entertainments that offend against Christian and human decency? Have I encouraged others to sin by my own failure to maintain these standards? Have I been faithful to the moral law of my married or single life?

Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?

Have I always tried to act in the true freedom of the sons of God according to the law of the Spirit or am I the slave of forces within me?

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AN ACT OF CONTRITION

Father, I have sinned against you and am not worthy to be called your child. Be merciful to me, a sinner.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE



THE LORD SAYS: YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART.

Is my heart set on God, so that I really love him above all things and am faithful to his commandments, as a son loves his father? Or am I more concerned about the things of this world? Have I a right intention in what I do?

God spoke to us in his Son. Is my faith in God firm and secure? Am I wholehearted in accepting the Church's teaching? Have I been careful to grow in my understanding of the faith, to hear God's Word, to listen to instructions on the faith, to avoid dangers to faith? Have I been always strong and fearless in professing my faith in God and the Church? Have I been willing to be known as a Christian in private and public life?

Have I prayed morning and evening? When I pray, do I really raise my mind and heart to God, or is it a matter of words only? Do I offer God my difficulties, my joys, and my sorrows? Do I turn to God in time of temptation?

Have I love and reverence for God's name? Have I offended him in blasphemy, swearing falsely, or taking his name in vain? Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints?

Do I keep Sundays and feast days holy by taking a full part, with attention and devotion, in the liturgy, and especially in the Mass? Have I fulfilled the precept of annual confession and of communion during the Easter season?

Are there false gods that I worship by giving them greater attention and deeper trust than I give to God: money, superstition, spiritism, or other occult practices.



The Lord says: Love one another as I have loved you.

Have I a genuine love for my neighbors? Or do I use them for my own ends, or do to them what I would not want done to myself? Have I given grave scandal by my words or actions?

In my family life, have I contributed to the well-being and happiness of the rest of the family by patience and genuine love? Have I been obedient to parents, showing them proper respect and giving them help in their spiritual and material needs? Have I been careful to give a Christian upbringing to my children, and to help them by good example and by exercising authority as a parent. Have I been faithful to my husband (wife) in my heart and in my relations with others?

Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate? Do I do my best to help the victims of oppression, misfortune, and poverty? Or do I look down on my neighbor, especially the poor, the sick, the elderly, strangers, and people of other races?

Does my life reflect the mission I received in confirmation? Do I share in the apostolic and charitable works of the Church and in the life of my parish? Have I helped to meet the needs of the Church and of the world and prayed for them: for unity in the Church, for the spread of the Gospel among the nations, for peace and justice, etc.?

Am I concerned for the good and prosperity of the human community in which I live, or do I spend my life caring only for myself? Do I share to the best of my ability in the work of promoting justice, morality, harmony, and love in human relations? Have I done my duty as a citizen? Have I paid my taxes?

In my work or profession am I just, hard working, honest, serving society out of love for others? Have I paid a fair wage to my employees? Have I been faithful to my promises and contracts?

Have I obeyed legitimate authority and given it due respect?

If I am in a position of responsibility or authority, do I use this for my own advantage or for the good of others, in a spirit of service?

Have I been truthful or fair, or have I injured others by deceit, calumny, detraction, rash judgment, or violation of a secret?

Have I done violence to others by damage to life or limb, reputation, honor, or material possessions? Have I involved them in loss? Have I been responsible for advising an abortion or procuring one? Have I kept up hatred for others? Am I estranged from others through quarrels, enmity, insults, anger? Have I been guilty of refusing to testify to the innocence of another because of selfishness?

Have I stolen the property of others? Have I desired it unjustly and inordinately? Have I damaged it? Have I made restitution of other people's property and made good their loss?

If I have been injured, have I been ready to make peace for the love of Christ and to forgive, or do I harbor hatred and the desire for revenge?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action?
- Have I engaged in any sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control in my marriage?
- Has each sexual act in my marriage been open to the transmission of new life?
- Have I been guilty of sexual self gratification
- Have I sought to control my thoughts?
- Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words and actions?
- Am I careful to dress modestly?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I taken what is not mine?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, or at home?
- Do I gamble excessively, thereby denying my family of their needs?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?

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

- Have I lied?
- Have I gossiped?
- Have I spoken behind someone else's back?
- Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
- Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?

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

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused impure thoughts by impure reading, movies, conversation, or curiosity?
- Do I seek to control my imagination?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?

10 You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- Am I jealous of what other people have?
- Do I envy the families or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life?
- Do I trust that God will care for all my material and spiritual needs?

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Act of Contrition

Lord Jesus,
you opened the eyes of the blind,
healed the sick,
forgave the sinful woman,
and after Peter's denial
confirmed him in your love.
Listen to my prayer:
forgive all my sins,
renew your love in my heart,
help me to live in perfect unity
with my fellow Christians
that I may proclaim your saving power
to all the world.

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An Examination of Conscience

In regard to myself, my life, my energies—

- Have I used the energies and talents God gave me to their fullest?
- Have I been too proud to admit I was wrong and ask for forgiveness of:
 - my spouse?
 - a friend?
 - a parent?
 - an employee or employer?
- Do I realize I am not perfect or always right?
- Have I been self-satisfied and unwilling to change or improve my habits?
- Have I tried to be important in front of my family and friends?
- Have I let greed and misery make me want so many useless things?

In regard to my relationship with others—

- Have I lived in such a way that others are drawn to Christ by my example?
- Have I extended to others both acceptance and constructive criticism?
- Do I have the ability to tolerate imperfections and quirks of others?
- Am I spiteful or do I seek revenge when I am offended by another?
- Have I refused to make peace with another?

In regard to my relationship with society—

- Do I tolerate or do I actively seek and work for a change for the better?
- When I am with others, do I use it as an opportunity to show forth that I believe in the Gospel?
- Do I speak out and act in support of those who are victims of prejudice?
- Have I driven under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

In regard to my relationship with God and his call to me in community—

- Do I recognize my need for, and dependency upon, God?
- Am I honest in my prayer to God?
- Do I realize my own capacity for sin?
- Do I seek to answer the Christian call to worship in community through Mass and the Sacraments?
- Do I let God be God for me or do I seek to manipulate God through my prayers?
- Do I turn to God only in need?

Have I been faithful to my vocation?

- Single Life—
 - Have I remained faithful to:
 - God
 - Self
 - Others
 - Am I fostering my spiritual life daily?
 - Is chastity a virtue I actively pursue? Do I refrain from sexual self-gratification?
 - If in a relationship, do I abstain from sexual activity as a means of respecting God's will and proving to myself and my friend/fiancé that:
 - not only can I be faithful to my chastity before marriage, but;
 - the strength which enables me to say NO now will be the same strength that will enable me to say NO to another once we're married?

• Married Life—

- Fidelity to ones spouse is a four-fold obligation:
 - Spiritual fidelity
 - Emotional fidelity
 - Psychological fidelity
 - Sexual fidelity.
- Do I pray regularly with my spouse {in addition to Sunday Mass}?
- Do I share with friends or peers frustrations which should rightly be shared first/only with my spouse?
- Am I attentive to my spouse in conversations and discussions, or do I patronize?
- Have I been with another person in a way I should only be with my spouse?

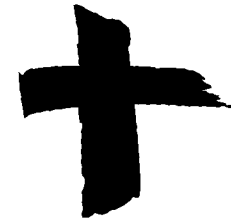
In regard to my family—

- Do I make choices in favor of myself instead of considering the needs of others?
- Have I been willing to help heal wounds?
- Have I acted in bitterness?
- Have I refused to forgive and forget?



Reflections on the Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.
 - Do I give God time every day in prayer?
 - Do I seek to love Him with my whole heart?
 - Have I been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved with the occult?
 - Do I seek to surrender myself to God's Word as taught by the Church?
 - Have I received Communion in the state of mortal sin?
 - Have I deliberately told a lie in Confession or have I withheld a mortal sin from the priest in Confession?



2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
 - Have I used God's name in vain: lightly or carelessly?
 - Have I been angry with God?
 - Have I wished evil upon any other person?
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
 - Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation (except when sick)?
 - Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
 - Do I do needless work on Sunday?
4. Honor your father and your mother.
 - Do I honor and obey my parents?
 - Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and children?
 - Have I given my family good religious example?
 - Do I try to bring peace into my home life?
 - Do I care for/visit my aged and infirm relatives?
5. You shall not kill.
 - Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
 - Have I physically harmed anyone?
 - Have I abused alcohol or drugs?
 - Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin?
 - Have I been angry or resentful?
 - Have I harbored hatred in my heart?
 - Have I mutilated myself through any form of sterilization?
 - Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization?

- Have I failed to live in harmony with others because of an overbearing spirit?
- Have I failed to look for the good in others and to sincerely acknowledge and appreciate them? Have I instead given in to the temptation to criticize them destructively?
- Have I tried to discover what situations cause me to be overly sensitive? Have I ignored the fact that being overly sensitive is disordered, offends God, makes me unhappy, and in turn spreads unhappiness?

Section 7

- Have I failed to strictly but peacefully regulate my sense of touch, which is the most sensitive faculty that can so easily lead to sin?
- Have I failed to bring my sense of taste under control by regulating the quality and quantity of my eating and drinking in accord with right reason? Have I given in to excesses?
- Have I neglected to refine my speech and conform it to the spirit of our Lord? Have I said anything to anyone, or even to myself, that I could not say to God?
- Have I failed to guard my eyes by looking at things that are occasions of sin for me? Have I looked at immodest pictures or images from the computer or other social means of communication?
- Have I opened to anyone else the exclusive place in my heart that belongs only to my spouse?
- Have I neglected to acquire the virtue of perfect chastity by avoiding persons, places and things that I know from experience are, or are likely to be, occasions of sin for me?
- Have I examined my conscience daily and received the Sacrament of Penance frequently?
- Have I given in to cowardice in the hard spiritual battles God calls me to fight?
- Have I neglected to beg for the graces I need in order to make the many acts of virtue I constantly need to make?

- Have I failed to give my love to God by cultivating an abiding sorrow for sin and by frequently telling God sincerely that I love Him?
- Have I neglected to develop my knowledge of the Catholic Faith and to constantly grow in that Faith by telling God sincerely that I believe everything he has revealed and that the Church teaches?
- Have I neglected to share my Catholic Faith with others?

Section 8

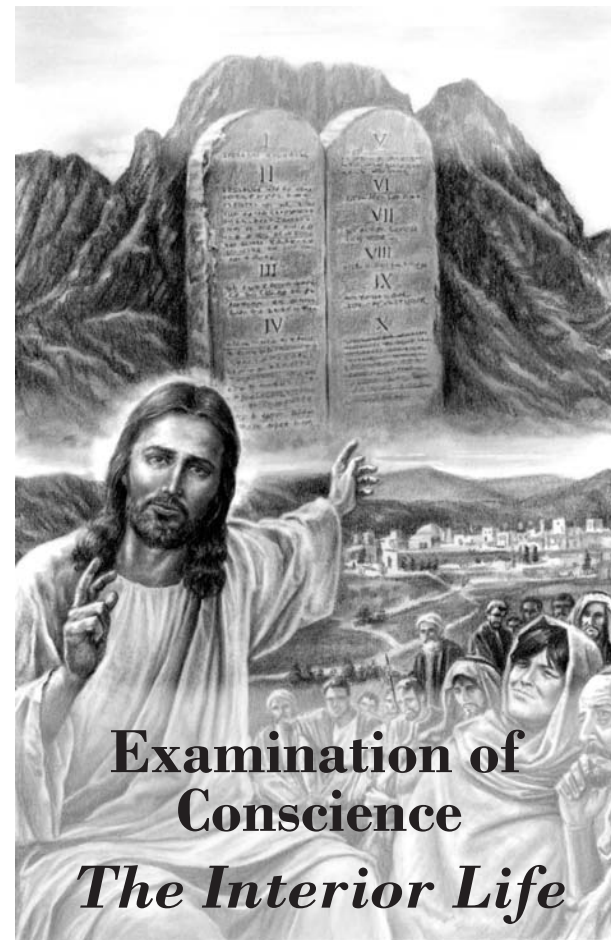
- Have I allowed myself to give in to disordered, unjust, or uncontrolled anger, and so to create discord and discontent, and even to partially or wholly tear down a happy family spirit?
- Have I tried to develop meekness by subjecting all of my emotions to the order of reason?
- Have I shown patience in bearing with the faults of others?
- Have I tried to get along well with everyone?
- Have I allowed myself to be easily wounded by my friends and to give vent to feelings that would hurt them?
- Have I neglected to take seriously the fact that each act of virtue, regardless of how small it may be, goes into the forming and final makeup of my character?
- Have I sincerely believed that when my acts of virtue outnumber my acts of sin, my character is that much holier, and that perfect character is formed by perfect virtue?



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The Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation



**Examination of
 Conscience**
The Interior Life



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53n. Examination of Conscience

✠ The Interior Life ✠

Section 1

- Have I frequently asked the Holy Family for the grace to love God to such a degree that I would be ready to lose everything rather than offend Him through mortal or willful venial sins?
- Have I shown my love for God by the way I speak, think and act?
- Have I fulfilled my daily duties well with joyful fidelity as the best way of showing my love for God?
- Have I often reached outside of my family to evangelize others and to zealously seek to draw them to love God?
- Have I tried to transform my daily crosses into moments of growth in grace by accepting them joyfully?

Section 2

- Have I tried to offer my aches and pains patiently and silently, prayerfully begging God's help to endure them, rather than fretting interiorly or complaining to others about them?
- Have I given in to inordinate self-love, manifested by self-pity, by neglecting or refusing to fulfill my responsibilities, or by becoming too anxious and preoccupied with self?
- Have I tended, out of inordinate pride, to draw undue attention to my successes? Do I, through this same inordinate pride, blame others when things are not successful?
- Have I practiced loving God more than myself by telling Him frequently and sincerely that I love Him, by giving Him my best efforts, and by giving Him the credit for any and all good fruits?
- Have I sought to consciously humble myself before God and others and to examine whether I am working to serve Him or myself?

Section 3

- Have I put the greater needs of others before my own and tried to be forgetful of self?
- Have I tried to grow in the virtue of obedience by choosing God's will over my own will?
- Have I tried to grow in the virtue of mortification by self-denial?
- Have I tried to grow in the virtue of humility by giving God the credit for enabling me and helping me to do what I do?
- Have I tried to grow in the virtue of prayerfulness by acknowledging my total dependence on God, by striving to remain recollected and to listen to Him, and by frequent acts of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, reparation and petition?
- Have I sought to know God's will and conform myself to it, and aim in this way to grow in perfection?

Section 4

- Have I tried to practice charity by always acting with goodness and by seeking perfection? Do I deceive myself by thinking I am maintaining a high spiritual standard while at the same time allowing myself to lack charity in my dealings with others?
- Have I failed to give a good example by my conduct?
- Have I fulfilled my duties and helped others to fulfill theirs, especially those who may be under my supervision?
- Do I frequently choose to love God, first and foremost, and myself and others in a wholesome way?
- Do I frequently make acts of faith in God's love for me and for my neighbor?
- Have I identified my primary faults and consciously tried to make progress against them by choosing to not give in to them and to practice the opposite virtues?
- Have I given in to the tendency to fall into imprudent practices of devotion, such as increasing the number

of prayers or other pious acts to the point of neglecting my daily duties and mental prayer?

- Have I tried to keep in mind the spirit of the law rather than merely following the letter?
- Have I harmed someone's reputation through a lack of charity, calumny (telling a lie about someone), or detraction (revealing the truth about someone's faults or defects without just cause)? Have I tried to repair damages I have caused?

Section 5

- Have I allowed courage to give me a false self-confidence, leading to egoism?
- Have I been so prideful and self-determined that I have deliberately refused to accept advice?
- Am I so concerned with what others might think that I have kept silent when I should have spoken up?
- Have I given in to discouragement when my efforts to grow in holiness have seemed at times to be a slow, hard and gradual process?
- Have I allowed temptation to undermine my perseverance by not starting or continuing what I am called to do?

Section 6

- Have I prayed for the grace to replace false or inordinate pride with humility? Have I in fact acted as though the gaining of a virtue depends on my human efforts alone?
- Have I asked for the light of the Holy Spirit's gift of knowledge to know myself and for the grace to believe and live according to that knowledge, which is what true humility is?
- Do I welcome and accept humiliations? Do I sincerely believe I can make no true progress in the virtue of humility if I refuse to accept humiliations?
- Do I study myself to see what circumstances cause me to fall into sins of pride?

7. You shall not steal, and (10) You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

- ___ Have I seriously entertained temptations to steal?
- ___ Have I stolen anything? What was it worth? Have I returned the stolen item or intend to return it?
- ___ Have I refused to seek the owner of property that I have found?
- ___ Have I damaged or been responsible for the damage of another person's property? What would be the cost of repairing or replacing it?
- ___ Have I caused harm to anyone in business dealings by means of fraud, deception, or coercion?
- ___ Have I been responsible with the money or other means of wealth which God has entrusted to me?
- ___ Have I spent beyond my means?
- ___ Have I deprived others of their needs by spending too little?
- ___ Have I been envious of the wealth or material goods of another person?
- ___ Have I honored my debts?
- ___ Have I been lazy with respect to my employment, household chores, work, or studies?
- ___ Have I been greedy?
- ___ Have I placed too high a value on material goods?
- ___ Have I failed to help those whom I know are truly needy?
- ___ Have I set my heart primarily on earthly pleasures and possessions, and not on the true treasures of Heaven?

8. You shall not lie.

- ___ Have I lied?
- ___ Have I sought to make up for the damage caused by my lies?
- ___ Have I accused or hastily judged others of wrongdoing without sufficient evidence?
- ___ Have I been guilty of detraction (that is, speaking about the faults of others without a good reason for doing so)?
- ___ Have I been guilty of calumny (that is, to falsely accuse someone of sinful conduct)?
- ___ Have I gossiped about another person?
- ___ Have I been excessively critical, negative, and uncharitable in my speech?
- ___ Have I failed to honor the confidences or secrets entrusted to me by another? Have I revealed them to someone else without permission or without due or serious cause?
- ___ Have I failed to defend the good name or honor of others?

Steps to a Good Confession

1. Carefully examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Make a firm resolution not to sin again and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
4. Tell your sins to the priest, say an Act of Contrition when asked to do so, and receive absolution.
5. Do the penance the priest gives you.

Suggested Dialogue

Priest: May the Lord be on your heart, on your mind, and on your lips so that you may know your sins, and confess them with true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment.

Penitent: Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ since my last confession

Here state your sins. Priest gives counsel and penance.

Penitent makes Act of Contrition when asked to do so:

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they have offended Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Receive absolution and then respond "Thanks be to God."



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4-8-10/327-176

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation



“To those who have been far away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love I make this appeal: come back to this source of grace; do not be afraid! Christ is waiting for you. He will heal you and you will be at peace with God!”

—John Paul II, September 13, 1987

High School and Adult



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1. You shall not have other gods before Me.

- ___ Have I been slow or reluctant to perform my duties toward God?
- ___ Have I neglected to pray every day?
- ___ Have I prepared myself properly for Holy Communion or received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?
- ___ Have I neglected to confess a mortal sin in a previous confession, when I was aware of committing one?
- ___ Have I practiced superstition or engaged in occult practices, such as consulting horoscopes, tarot cards, or ouija boards?
- ___ Have I participated in séances or satanic services and/or prayers?
- ___ Have I refused to accept any teaching of the Church?
- ___ Have I put my soul in danger by reading, viewing, or listening to material that attacks the teachings of the Catholic Church in matters of faith or morals?
- ___ Do I belong to any anti-Catholic organizations or have I attended the meetings or gatherings of any of them?
- ___ Have I worshiped at any non-Catholic services which the Catholic Church does not approve?

2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord Your God in vain.

- ___ Have I taken the Holy Name of God in vain or spoken His Name in anger?
- ___ Have I jokingly or irreverently spoken about God or about any sacred person, place or thing?
- ___ Have I been a baptismal or confirmation sponsor in a non-Catholic ceremony?
- ___ Have I broken any promise(s) in which I invoked God's Name (oaths)?

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

- ___ Have I failed to attend Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation without just cause (for example, serious illness or impassible roads or pathways)?
- ___ Have I arrived at Mass after the Liturgy of the Word or left Mass early, without just cause?
- ___ Have I deliberately failed to pay attention at Mass?
- ___ Have I worn improper attire to Mass, or distracted others from paying attention at Mass?
- ___ Am I generous in helping the Church, contributing some of my allowance or savings at collection time to help the Church in her necessities as much as I can?
- ___ Do I fast and practice abstinence on the days or at the times which are appointed by the Church?
- ___ Have I fulfilled my yearly Easter duty of receiving Holy Communion (and going to Confession, if necessary)?
- ___ Have I performed (or required others to perform) unnecessary labor on Sundays (not including acts of mercy or labor as a public servant, hospital worker, caring for farm animals, etc.)?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- ___ Have I disobeyed my parents, or have I been disrespectful to them in other ways?
- ___ Have I failed to express my love for my parents?
- ___ Have I failed to help my parents when they were unable to meet their basic needs?
- ___ Do I nurse angry feelings or show resentment when I am corrected by my parents?
- ___ Am I content with the blessings I have received from God in my parents and family, or do I nurture a selfish or an unwholesome desire to leave my parents' home when I am too young to do so?
- ___ Am I a financial burden to my parents when I can take care of my own financial needs?
- ___ Do I faithfully perform, without complaining, the household and outdoor chores my parents give me to do?

5. You shall not kill.

- ___ Have I lost my temper or become unjustly angry at others?
- ___ Have I murdered or otherwise unjustly injured (no matter how slight) anyone?
- ___ Have I been a reckless driver?
- ___ Have I tempted others to sin by my bad example, immodest dress, or sinful conversation?
- ___ Have I encouraged others to read or watch sinful materials or programs or to otherwise do sinful things?
- ___ Have I tried to make up for or repair for any scandal I may have given others?
- ___ Have I tried to commit suicide?
- ___ Have I failed to take proper care of my health?
- ___ Have I mutilated myself or someone else?
- ___ Have I been drunk or intoxicated on alcohol or other substances?
- ___ Have I intentionally overindulged in food or drink (gluttony)?
- ___ Have I participated in gang fights or other illegal gang activities?
- ___ Have I picked fights with or quarreled with anyone, including my brothers and sisters?
- ___ Have I been a bully or maliciously teased or insulted others?
- ___ Have I consented to a sterilization or encouraged others to do so, or actively taken part in someone else's sterilization?
- ___ Have I practiced contraception or encouraged others to do so?
- ___ Have I recommended, consented to, advised, or actively taken part in an abortion? Am I aware of Church teaching that abortion is a mortal sin, and that those who actively take part (for example, doctor, nurse, and mother) in an abortion are excommunicated?

- ___ Have I fulfilled my responsibility as a voting citizen to elect government officials, where possible, who uphold God's law, particularly with respect to the sanctity of human life from conception until natural death?
- ___ Have I harmed anyone by my speech or actions?
- ___ Have I desired to take revenge on anyone who offended me?
- ___ Have I hated or nursed bad feelings (resentment) or refused pardon toward any person?
- ___ Have I sought pardon of those whom I have offended?

6. You shall not commit adultery, and (9) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- ___ Have I deliberately recalled or entertained impure thoughts or desires?
- ___ Have I been involved in acts which arouse lustful desires (such as necking, petting, passionate kissing, and prolonged embraces)?
- ___ Have I had sexual relations with a member of the opposite sex, when neither of us was married (fornication)?
- ___ Have I had sexual relations with a married person who is not my spouse (adultery)?
- ___ Have I engaged in impure conversations?
- ___ Have I placed myself in proximate (close) occasions of sin, such as sensual dances; sexually suggestive movies, plays, or reading material; evil company; houses of prostitution; massage parlors; sharing of a room with a member of the opposite sex; being alone with a person with whom I have continually sinned with, or deliberately taken such a person to a secluded place?
- ___ Have I neglected to dress modestly or to otherwise safeguard purity?
- ___ Have I failed to investigate the sinful potentials of watching a particular show or reading a particular book or magazine?
- ___ Have I willfully looked at immodest pictures?
- ___ Have I displayed immodest looks or glances at myself or others?
- ___ Have I led others to commit the sins of immodesty or impurity? Specifically speaking, what were they?
- ___ Have I committed impure acts with myself (masturbation)?
- ___ Have I committed impure acts with someone else, either of the opposite sex or the same sex (homosexual acts)?
- ___ Do I have evil or immoral friendships? Have I taken steps to break these friendships?
- ___ Have I engaged in immodest conduct or conversation with someone I am seriously thinking of marrying?
- ___ Have I tended to use this person as an object for my pleasure, rather than a person created in God's image and likeness whom God has placed in my life to respect and reverence?

___ Have I seriously entertained temptations to steal?

___ Have I been greedy?

8. You shall not lie.

___ Did I tell the truth?

___ Have I lied?

___ Did I say things about other people that are not true?

___ Did I cheat in class or in games?

___ Have I gossiped about another person?

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

___ Do I think mostly about myself and what I want?

___ How often do I think about other people and what they would like?

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

___ Do I thank God for the things that He has given me?

___ Do I thank my parents and relatives for the things they have given me?

___ Do I spend more time thinking about things that I want than I do talking to God?

Steps to a Good Confession:

1. Carefully examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Make a firm resolution not to sin again and to avoid the near occasion of sin.
4. Tell your sins to the priest and receive absolution.
5. Do the penance the priest gives you.

Suggested Dialogue:

Priest: May the Lord be on your heart, on your mind, and on your lips so that you may know your sins, and confess them with true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment.

Penitent: Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ since my last confession.

Here state your sins.

Priest gives counsel and penance.

Penitent makes Act of Contrition:

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they have offended Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Receive absolution and then respond "Thanks be to God."

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“To those who have been far away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love I make this appeal: come back to this source of grace; do not be afraid! Christ is waiting for you. He will heal you and you will be at peace with God!”

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Ages 10–14



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1. You shall not have other gods before Me.

- ___ How have I acted toward God?
- ___ Do I think of God and speak to Him by praying to Him every day?
- ___ Have I made a bad confession (purposely avoiding to confess a mortal sin)?
- ___ Have I received Jesus in Holy Communion unworthily (with mortal sin on my soul)?

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

- ___ Have I used bad words?
- ___ Have I jokingly or irreverently spoken about God or holy things?
- ___ Have I tried hard to keep the promises and resolutions which I have made to God?
- ___ Have I spoken God's Name in anger?

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

- ___ Do I go to Mass on Sunday?
- ___ Do I do all I can to make Sunday a day of rest and joy for my family?
- ___ Do I take part in the Mass, or do I distract others by laughing, talking, or playing?
- ___ Have I deliberately failed to pay attention at Mass?
- ___ Am I generous in helping the Church, contributing some of my allowance or savings at collection time to help the Church in her necessities as much as I can?
- ___ Have I fulfilled my yearly Easter duty of receiving Holy Communion (and going to Confession, if necessary)?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- ___ Do I pay attention to my parents, priest, and teachers, especially when they talk to me about God?
- ___ Do I obey my parents and teachers quickly and cheerfully, or must I be reminded many times?
- ___ Do I tell my parents or those in authority over me that I am sorry and ask them to forgive me when I have not obeyed them or have not been respectful toward them?
- ___ Have I failed to express my love for my parents?
- ___ Do I nurse angry feelings or show resentment when I am corrected by my parents?
- ___ Do I obey the rules of my home and school?
- ___ Do I pray every day for the help I need to be a holy child, and a holy brother or sister?

5. You shall not kill.

- ___ Have I treated other people badly?
- ___ Do I help my brothers, sisters, and classmates when they need my help?
- ___ Am I kind to everyone?
- ___ Did I hurt anyone on purpose?
- ___ Have I fought with my brothers, sisters, or friends?
- ___ Am I willing to talk or play with everyone?
- ___ Have I forgiven all those who have hurt me, for love of Jesus?
- ___ Did I make fun of anyone, put anyone down, or tease anyone to the point of upsetting them?

- ___ Have I hated anyone or nursed bad feelings, resented, or refused pardon toward any person?
- ___ Have I sought pardon of those whom I have offended?
- ___ Do I do all my class work and my chores at home well?
- ___ Do I take care of my health by eating the right food, getting enough sleep, and doing other things that I know are good for me?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- ___ Have I kept my mind, heart, and body pure, as the dwelling, or temple, of God?
- ___ Have I been impure with touches (by myself or with another person)?
- ___ Have I been impure with words or thoughts?
- ___ Have I watched impure movies or television programs or listened to music that offended God?
- ___ Have I engaged in impure conversations? Did I begin them?
- ___ Have I neglected to dress modestly or to otherwise safeguard purity?
- ___ Have I willfully looked at immodest pictures?
- ___ Have I displayed immodest looks or glances at myself or others?

7. You shall not steal.

- ___ Did I steal or keep things that are not mine?
- ___ Am I willing to share my things with others?
- ___ Did I return things I have borrowed or stolen?

___ Have I thanked God for His countless blessings, and taken good care of my things? (e.g., keeping my room neat and taken care of my clothes, books, desk, toys, games, bicycle, etc.)

___ Do I willingly share with others?

___ Have I wished for or pressured my parents to purchase things which I do not really need?

The Great Commandment: “Love others, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

___ Have I done my best to love everyone in my family? my friends? my enemies? strangers?

___ Is there anyone I have not loved the way Jesus wants me to love?

___ Have I forgiven others as I ask Jesus to forgive my sins?

Steps to a Good Confession:

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Suggested Dialogue:

Priest: May the Lord be on your heart, on your mind, and on your lips so that you may know your sins, and confess them with true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment.

Penitent: Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ since my last confession.

Here state your sins.

Priest gives counsel and penance.

Penitent makes Act of Contrition:

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they have offended Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

Receive absolution and then respond “Thanks be to God.”

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Up to Age 10



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1. You shall not have other gods before Me.

- Do I always put Jesus first?
- Have I tried to do my best for Jesus, even when I've had to do things that I didn't want to do?
- Have I paid attention and been reverent during Mass and prayers?
- Have I spoken unnecessarily or misbehaved in church?
- Have I thought of Jesus during the day?

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

- Have I used God's Name with love?
- Have I used bad words?
- Have I poked fun at or laughed at religious or holy things?
- Have I always showed reverence towards sacred persons, places, and things? (e.g., the Pope, bishops, priests, nuns and brothers; chapels and churches; crucifix, statues, picture of saints, Rosary, etc.)

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

- Have I helped my parents to get to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation on time?
- Do I try to remember that Jesus died on the Cross for me and gives Himself to me at every Mass?
- Do I dress nicely for Mass?
- If I receive an allowance or receive money as a gift, do I give back part of it to God at collection time, showing my thanks to God?

Do I help my family to make Sunday a special day for Jesus?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- Have I helped and obeyed my parents, my teachers, my elders, and all those who take care of me?
- Have I done my work cheerfully and well?
- Have I studied and completed my school assignments as well as I am able to?
- Have I talked back to my parents?
- Have I prayed for my parents?
- Have I been polite to other people, especially to my elders and to my family?

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I been unkind to anyone?
- Have I been unwilling or slow to forgive anyone who may have hurt me?
- Have I taken good care of myself?
- Have I eaten food which will make my body healthy?
- Have I gotten enough exercise?
- Have I gone to sleep on time?
- Have I gotten up on time?
- Have I done anything that might have hurt me or someone else?
- Have I teased my brothers, sisters or friends in a mean way to upset them?
- Have I been mean to animals, littered, or been disrespectful towards the beauty of God's creation?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I kept my mind, heart, and body pure, as the temple of the Holy Spirit in my soul?
- Have I made any sacrifices for Jesus?
- Have I complained about the weather, food, or anything else?
- Have I wasted my time watching too much TV, or watching bad TV shows or movies?
- Have I looked at bad books or magazines, listened to or told bad jokes or stories?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen anything?
- Have I taken someone else's things without asking?
- Have I returned the things I borrowed?
- Have I ruined someone else's things?

8. You shall not lie.

- Have I told lies?
- Have I cheated in games or on my school tests?
- Have I broken a promise?
- Have I hurt someone else's feelings or their good name by something I said?

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

- Have I tried to think only good thoughts which help me love God and all my neighbors?

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

- Have I been grateful to God for what I have?

Examination of Conscience

(Presence of God)

Do I love God above everything else? Do I live as a child of God, confident in the Father's mercy? Am I humble? Do I depend on God as I should?

Am I prideful? Do I try to make the world revolve around me? Do I live out a sense of self-sufficiency, imposing my will on others, acting as if I were the cause of good in my life? Am I presumptuous? Do I think I can do whatever I want and that it will not matter to God?

Do I yearn to know God's will and do I abandon myself to divine Providence day by day and moment by moment? Do I pray every day? Do I go to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day? Do I devote myself to growing in faith?

Am I thankful? Do I express my gratitude sincerely and outwardly, especially in works of mercy? Do I make excuses for my faults, blame others, or rationalize my actions? Am I self-righteous?

Am I forgiving? Do I harbor grudges, resentments – do I take delight in the misfortunes of others? Do I judge others, label others, exclude others, and condemn others? Is my life ruled by anger, jealousy, envy, or impatience?

Do I make gods of money, power, prestige, accomplishment, materialism, sensuality, vanity, pleasure, comfort, leisure, complacency, apathy, or anything else? Do I put myself first through self-centeredness, or egoism?

Do I dedicate myself to knowing, loving, and living the Truth as it is taught by the Catholic Church? Do I live in the Truth and do I tell the truth, always and without compromise? Do I misuse speech through cheating, gossiping, backbiting, profanity, blasphemy, complaining, being silent when I should speak, etc.? Am I true to my vows, my commitments, my contracts, and my word?

Is my mind filled with thoughts that are lustful, viscous, carnal, mean-spirited, prejudicial, venal, and worldly?

Do I waste time? Am I generous with my time? Am I lazy? Do the priorities in my life reflect and serve the precious gift of faith God has given me? Do I love more for myself than for God and others?

Do I live by faith or by current fads, by popular ideologies, by the pressures and deceptions of media and culture? Do I recognize how God is present and active in every moment of my life?



"The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness." – Pope Francis

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Examination of Conscience

(Based on the Beatitudes)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, God is with them always. Do I put God first in my life, praying in gratitude during good times and for help in bad times? Do others trust me to follow through with things I promise to do?

Blessed are those who are sad, for they will be comforted. Have I reached out to those who are sad, suffering or grieving? Do I visit sick, lonely or elderly members of my family and community? Do I share what I have with those in need? Have I given my time and talent to my parish?

Blessed are the meek and gentle, for they receive what God has promised. Do I sometimes want people to pay attention only to me? Do I express gratitude when others help me?

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Do I seek justice for others, especially for the poor and weak? Am I envious of what other people have? Are family and friends more important to me than material possessions? Have I been a good steward of the resources of the earth?

Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. Do I ask forgiveness of those I have offended? Have I made a sincere effort to forgive those who have hurt me? Am I willing to give others the benefit of the doubt? Do I judge people quickly and harshly?

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God. Is loving God and others important



to me? Am I always as loving as I can be? Do I seek God in prayer, in the sacraments and in regular attendance at Mass?

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Do I contribute to conflict by harsh criticism, bitterness or gossip? Am I willing to make peace with people who want to make peace with me? Do I ever take the first step in making peace with someone?

Blessed are those who do what is right, even when others treat them unfairly. The kingdom of God belongs to them. Do I “go along with the crowd” because I fear the consequences of standing up for the truth? When choosing what to say or do, do I always say or do what I know is right?

Prayer 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 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. Amen.



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