

Preparing for the Sacrament of Confession

Elements of Making a Good Confession:

- A thorough examination of conscience since your last confession is necessary.
- Inform the priest of the approximate length of time since your last Confession.
- Say to the priest: "Father forgive me for I have sinned. It has been (xx) years (or months) since my last Confession."
- Confess your serious sins, or mortal sins, as completely as possible, naming them as specifically as possible and with some indication of their frequency. Less serious sins should also be mentioned specifically, but can be mentioned more generally.
- In order to receive the effects of forgiveness from your sins, there needs to be a sincere desire to reject the sinful behavior confessed and a willingness to respond to God's grace by attempting to avoid all future sin, as well as situations when you may easily fall into sin.

Quotes from Scripture that may be helpful in thinking about your sins:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will refresh you.
Mt 11:28

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?
Mt 18:12

God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.
Jn 3:17

Making an Act of Contrition:

The Act of Contrition is said after you have confessed your sins to the Priest and after he has given you a penance to complete.

*Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you.
I detest all of my sins because of your just punishments,
but most of all because they offend you, my God,
who are good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace,
To sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.*

Remember, it is completely fine to ask the priest for help if you are unsure about what to say.

Examination of Conscience prior to the Sacrament of Confession

Below is a suggested way of examining your conscience in preparation for a fruitful confession of sin. Based on the Ten Commandments, the below provides examples of the kinds of sins that tend to be committed against each of those divine precepts.

I am the Lord your God. You shall not have any other gods before Me

- Have I put money, popularity, material things or any other good above my relationship with God?
- Have I rejected God's revelation to me of who He is or what He wants me to do?
- Have I rejected God's revelation as it comes through the Church's teachings?
- Have I tried to turn away from a vocation to which I think God might be calling me?
- Have I despaired of God's help or provision for me in my times of need?
- Have I presumed that God would forgive me when I decided to do something sinful?
- Have I used things that are superstitious, occult, or related to witchcraft?

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

- Have I used the name of the Lord in vain, or in any other way that was improper?
- Have I made false oaths or failed to keep a promise made in God's sight?
- Have I disrespected the holiness of God and/or of persons or things that are specially associated with God (e.g., priests, sacred objects, parish buildings. etc.)?

You shall remember to keep holy the Lord's Day

- Have I failed through my own fault not to worship God on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation by attending Mass?
- Have I made an effort to keep Sunday holy by spending time with my family, spending extra time in prayer or in charitable activities, and resting from the work of the week?
- Do I make an effort to pray regularly and attentively throughout the week?

You shall honor your father and mother

- Have I been respectful of my parents, step-parents or other family members?
- Have I been respectful of my boss?

You shall not kill

- Have I contributed to or concurred in any way with the taking of human life through abortion, euthanasia, or other means?
- Have I done damage to someone's reputation or well being in anyway?
- Have I done damage to myself through drugs, alcohol or other self-destructive behavior?
- Have I been a bad example to anyone else that might have made them fall into sin?
- Have I wished for ill fate to befall another?

You shall not commit adultery

You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse

- Have I engaged in willful sexual intercourse outside of marriage?
- Within marriage, have I engaged in sexual activity without regard for expressing true love for my spouse and/or without openness to the possibility of receiving the gift of human life?
- Have I pursued and entertained lustful thoughts?
- Have I been careless about the sexual content of materials I read or view in books, on the internet or on TV?
- Has my marriage been celebrated outside the Catholic Church or without permission of the Catholic Church?

You shall not steal

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

- Have I respected the property of others?
- Have I been unhappy with the blessings that God has given me and been jealous of another?
- Am I sinfully jealous of what others have?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

- Have I told lies? Have I gossiped?
- Have I told others someone's faults without serious reason to do so?