

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

BEFORE CONFESSION:

- Start by praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for help in making a good examination of conscience to prepare for Confession: *Come Holy Spirit, into my soul. Enlighten my mind that I may know the sins I ought to confess, and grant me your grace to confess them fully, humbly, and with a contrite heart. Help me to firmly resolve not to commit them again. O Blessed Virgin, Mother of my Redeemer, intercede for me through the Passion of Your Son, that I may obtain the grace to make a good confession. All you blessed Angels and Saints of God, pray for me, a sinner, that I may repent from my sins, and that my heart may be forever united with yours in eternal love. Amen.*
- Set aside some quiet time for reflection. Please read and reflect through the commandments listed below. Remember: we are obligated to confess mortal sins (including the approximate number times we have committed each one). If one willingly withholds or conceals a sin in confession it is sacrilege (another mortal sin) and invalidates the absolution. In order for a sin to be mortal, it must meet three conditions. If any of these three conditions is lacking, the sin may still be serious, but it may be considered venial. Mortal sin is 1) a *serious* sin against one of the ten commandments 2) committed knowing that the sin is serious and 3) committed with full freedom and consent. We can also confess the venial sins that are habitual or that we have an attachment to. If it helps, you may also take notes or list your sins as you go through this examination so you remember everything you ought to confess.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE:

First Commandment: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.

Have I deliberately doubted or denied any of the teachings of the Church? Have I harbored a hatred or resentment for God? Have I practiced any superstitions (such as horoscopes, fortune telling, Ouija board, etc.)? Have I loved something or someone more than God making them an idol? (money, power, sex, etc.)? Have I received Holy Communion while not being in the state of grace? Have I knowingly hidden a mortal sin or told a lie in Confession? Have I been ungrateful to God for His blessings? Have I been selfish to the point where I forget about the needs of others and of charity? Have I been faithful to my daily prayers? Have I been guilty of irreverence in church (e.g., conversation, behavior, or dress)?

Second Commandment: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Have I sworn by God's name falsely, rashly or in slight and trivial matters? Have I spoken of holy and sacred things in an irreverent way? Have I broken a vow or promise made to God?

Third Commandment: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

Have I missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I been late for Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation or left early through my own fault? Have I made others miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation, leave early or be late for Mass? Have I been willfully distracted during Mass? Have I talked in Mass without sufficient reason or caused others to be distracted? Have I done or commanded unnecessary work on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation? Did I fail to fast or abstain on a day prescribed by the Church? Have I failed to respect the holiness of the Eucharist by eating or drinking anything but water within one hour of receiving Holy Communion (other than for medical need)?

Fourth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother.

For Parents: Have I been resentful or hateful towards my children? Have I given scandal to them by cursing, drinking, yelling etc.? Have I been diligent in their religious instruction? Have I disciplined them properly when necessity calls for it? Have I been watchful with the company they keep, especially with the opposite sex? Have I neglected for the material needs of my family? Have I neglected to teach my children their prayers, send them to church, or give them a Christian education? Have I neglected to watch over my children, to monitor their companions, the books they read, the movies and TV shows they watch? Do I break the law in any way?

For Spouses: Have I been uncharitable or neglectful in my relationship with my spouse? Have I been unreasonably jealous or held a grudge? Do I spend enough quality time with my spouse? Do I speak uncharitably to my spouse? I am neglectful with household duties? Neglected the proper support and care of my family due to laziness or stinginess? Have I mistreated my spouse or children physically or verbally?

For Children: Have I been disobedient or disrespectful to my parents? Have I had hatred towards them or insulted them? Have I been idle or wasted too much time in social media, television, or other activities and neglected to spend time with God in prayer or with my family? Do I do my chores? Do I do anything illegal?

Fifth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

Do I easily get angry or lose my temper? Do I excessively complain? Have I desired, tried to bring about the death or injury of anyone? Have I borne hatred or resentment in my heart? Have I desired revenge? Have I quarreled or fought with anyone?

Did I participate in any form of physical violence? Did I cause harm to anyone with my words or actions? Have I mistreated others? Is there anyone with whom I refuse to speak, or anyone whom I will not forgive? Did I apologize and ask for forgiveness whenever I offended anyone? Have I taken pleasure in anyone's misfortunes? Have I been jealous or envious of anyone? Have I had or attempted to have an abortion or counseled anyone else to do so? Have I harmed or mutilated my body unnecessarily in any way? Have I entertained thoughts of suicide, desired to commit suicide or attempted suicide? Have I become excessively drunk or used illicit drugs? Have I overeaten or do I neglect to eat properly? Am I wasteful with food? Have I harmed my own soul by intentionally and without necessity by exposing it to temptations? Have I lead others to sin? Have I driven while intoxicated? Driven too fast, thus risking my life and the life of others? Have I had a vasectomy, tubal ligation, hysterectomy (without sufficient medical cause)? Have I taken contraceptive pills which may or may not be an abortifacient; or used barrier methods to avoid pregnancy? Have I used IVF in an attempt to have children knowing that this is against the Church's teaching? Am I open to having children in general?

Sixth and Ninth Commandments: Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

Have I denied my spouse his or her marriage rights? Have I committed adultery or fornication (premarital sex)? Have I been married civilly but refuse to get married in the Church? Have I been emotionally unfaithful to my spouse with someone else? Have I committed any unnatural sin against purity (homosexuality, bestiality, etc.)? Have I touched or embraced another person impurely? Have I engaged in prolonged or passionate kissing without being married to that person? Have I sinned impurely by myself (masturbation)? Have I read indecent books or watched suggestive movies, TV programs, or pornography or permitted my children to do so? Have I entertained or taken pleasure in impure thoughts? Have I indulged in lustful desires for anyone, or willfully desired to see or do anything impure? Have I willfully indulged in any sexual pleasure? Have I been an occasion of sin for others by wearing tight or otherwise revealing and immodest clothing? Have I done anything to provoke or occasion impure thoughts or desires in others deliberately or through carelessness? Have I used indecent language or told indecent jokes? Have I consented to impure glances? Have I neglected to control my imagination? Have I avoided the occasions of impurity? Do I engage in sexting or indecent chat rooms or conversations?

Seventh and Tenth Commandments: Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Have I stolen anything? (What or how much?) Have I damaged anyone's property? Have I been negligent in the stewardship of other people's money or goods? Do I give alms according to my capacity? Have I been greedy with what I have? Have I cheated on my taxes? Have I cheated or defrauded others? Have I gambled excessively? Have I refused or neglected to pay any debts? Have I acquired anything known to be stolen? Have I failed to return things borrowed? Have I cheated my employer of an honest day's work? Have I cheated my employees of their wages? Have I refused or neglected to help anyone in urgent need? Have I failed to make restitution for my stealing, cheating and frauds? Have I been envious of another because I don't have what he has? Have I been jealous of what another has? Have I been stingy? Have I been grasping and avaricious, placing too great importance upon material goods and comforts? Is my heart set on earthly possessions, instead of the true treasures of Heaven? Have I cheated on my school work? Have I given to the Church?

Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Have I lied? Have I caused unjust injury to another's good name either by revealing true or hidden faults (gossip or detraction) or by telling false defects (slander or calumny)? Have I rashly judged anyone (i.e. believed firmly, without sufficient evidence, that they are guilty of some moral defect or crime)? Have I disclosed another's sins? Have I lent an ear to gossip without walking away or putting an end to the conversation? Am I, without necessity, critical, negative or ever uncharitable in my talk? Have I refused or delayed restoring the good name which I have tarnished? Did I reveal a secret without due cause?

IN THE CONFESSIONAL:

Begin with the Sign of the Cross and say: "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been _____ (weeks/months/years) since my last confession. And these are my sins _____ (list sins here...)"

After the priest gives you your penance, recite the 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.*

After you have received the absolution and leave the confessional, do not forget to fulfill your penance and thank God for His infinite love and mercy.