

Confession Guide

for High School-Age Youth



“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

Why go to confession?

Jesus gave us the sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) when he breathed on the Apostles saying, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (Jn 20:22-23). This authority to forgive sins has been passed on from the apostles to the priests of our own time through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Confession is the only ordinary means of forgiveness for mortal sins committed after baptism. Though other extraordinary means are possible, they are never guaranteed and shouldn’t be presumed upon. As all sacraments do, it also bestows an increase of grace.

How do I make a good confession?

Essential to a good confession is **contrition**. Contrition means “turning away” from past sin with a resolve to sin no more (see Ezek 33:11; Jn 8:11). Since contrition implies a knowledge of one’s own sins, we should **examine our conscience** before confession (see page 2). During confession, we should state our sins humbly and frankly, avoiding any details that go beyond the nature of the sin or the circumstances affecting its gravity.

What do I need to confess?

All known mortal sins must be confessed. This includes the number of times they were committed (at least approximately). Venial sins, strictly speaking, do not need to be confessed, but it is spiritually beneficial for us to do so. For a sin to be mortal it must meet three conditions: It must be (1) **grave** (i.e. serious) and it must be committed with (2) **full knowledge** and (3) **deliberate consent**. Just as a sick person must be willing to show his wound to the doctor to be healed, so must we be willing to confess any and all mortal sins we are conscious of to be forgiven. Though confessing our sins can sometimes be difficult, it is reassuring to remember that a good confession is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience.

What if I forget a sin?

If a mortal sin is unintentionally forgotten, it is forgiven, but it must still be confessed at one’s next confession. If one is uncertain whether a mortal sin was already confessed in the past, there is no obligation to confess that sin. Nonetheless, it may be wise and prudent to do so.

Will the priest tell my sins to anyone?

The priest is **never** allowed to disclose the sins of a penitent for any reason.

Examination of Conscience for Adults

Ask yourself these questions to prepare for confession.

- I. **I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.** *Have I...*
- Deliberately concealed a mortal sin in a previous confession?
 - Received Holy Communion unworthily (i.e., while consciously aware of being in the state of mortal sin)?
 - Put anything else ahead of God in my life? (Friends, popularity, sports, school, video games, money, etc.)
 - Taken God's forgiveness for granted? Believed my sins are too great for God's mercy?
 - Stopped believing in God or denied my Catholic faith?
 - Put faith in non-Christian doctrines? (Reincarnation, karma, etc.)
 - Engaged in occult or superstitious practices such as witchcraft, Ouija boards, horoscopes, crystals, good luck charms, etc.?
 - Hung around friends who lead me away from God?
 - Watched movies/TV shows or listened to music harmful to my relationship with God?
 - Not prayed every day? Prayed only when I needed something?
- II. **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.** *Have I...*
- Used the name of God disrespectfully or even blasphemously?
 - Broken an oath or a promise to God?
- III. **Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day.** *Have I...*
- Missed Mass on Sunday or holy days of obligation?
 - Arrived at Mass late or left early on purpose?
 - Observed the one-hour fast before receiving Communion?
 - Showed proper reverence during Mass? Dressed appropriately for Mass? Chewed gum during Mass?
 - Fasted and abstained from meat when the Church asks?
 - Let unnecessary work get in the way of Sunday being a day for faith, rest, and family?
- IV. **Honor your father and your mother.** *Have I...*
- Obeyed my parents/guardians?
 - Done something they wouldn't approve of?
 - Showed them respect? Yelled, spoke rudely, or talked back to them?
 - Obeyed my teachers and those in rightful authority?
- V. **You shall not kill.** *Have I...*
- Deliberately harmed anyone?
 - Deliberately wished death upon another? Desired hell for another?

- Had an abortion or encouraged one?
- Lost my temper? Nurtured hatred or desire for revenge?
- Been racist or prejudiced in thoughts, words, or actions?
- Refused forgiveness to someone?
- Recklessly endangered my own life or the lives of others?
- Gotten drunk or used drugs?
- Hurt myself on purpose?
- Seriously entertained thoughts of suicide?
- Encouraged another to do something sinful?

VI. **You shall not commit adultery.** *Have I...*

- Had sexual relations with another?
- Viewed pornographic pictures or videos? Read pornographic books?
- Worn clothes that are immodest, revealing, or too tight? Dressed intentionally to arouse lust?
- Sexually harassed another?
- Used lewd or vulgar language?
- Engaged in impure actions with myself (i.e., masturbated)?

VII. **You shall not steal.** *Have I...*

- Stolen, damaged, or vandalized another's property?
- Illegally downloaded movies, music, or software?
- Been dishonest in my job?
- Spent too much money on electronics or clothing?
- Wasted my time through excessive TV, video games, or internet?

VIII. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.** *Have I...*

- Lied? Cheated?
- Judged another?
- Spread a false rumor?
- Gossiped about another's weaknesses, failures, or shortcomings?
- Shared secrets I shouldn't have?
- Insulted another? Bragged or boasted?
- Failed to stand up for someone when I should have?

IX. **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.** *Have I...*

- Deliberately entertained impure/unchaste thoughts?
- Worn clothes that are immodest, revealing, or too tight?
- Guarded my eyes against immodest or inappropriate looks?
- Been too concerned about my appearance?

X. **You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.** *Have I...*

- Been envious (jealous) of another's gifts, looks, or possessions?
- Cared too much about my popularity?
- Cared too little about those usually left out?
- Given in to greed?

How to go to Confession

After you enter the confessional, begin with the Sign of the Cross saying,
“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The priest may say aloud a prayer or a selection of scripture.

You say,

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ (number of weeks/months/years) since my last confession. These are my sins...”

Confess your sins. Include the number of times you committed each sin or at least its general frequency (e.g., about 3 times per week). For mortal sins, the number or frequency is required).

When finished say,

“For these and all the sins of my past life, I am sorry.”

The priest gives you a penance and invites you to say an Act of Contrition:

An 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.

The priest says the prayer of absolution. Listen especially for the words, “I absolve you from your sins.”

(If the priest says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,” you respond, “His mercy endures forever.”)

The priest concludes, “...Go in peace.” You respond,

“Thanks be to God.”

Nihil Obstat:

Rev. George Welzbacher, Censor liborum

Imprimatur:

+ Bernard A. Hebda

Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, September 2020

©2020