

Confession Preparation

Prayer before Confession: O Lord, grant me light to see myself as Thou dost see me, and the grace to be truly and effectively sorry for my sins. O Mary, help me to make a good confession.

How to Confess: First examine your conscience well, then tell the priest the specific kind of sins you have committed and, to the best of your ability, how many times you have committed them since your last good confession. You are obliged to confess only mortal sins, since you can obtain forgiveness for your venial sins by sacrifices and acts of charity. If you are in doubt about whether a sin is mortal or venial, mention your doubt to the confessor. Remember also, confession of venial sins is very helpful for avoiding sin and advancing toward Heaven.

Remember to confess your sins with supernatural sorrow as well as a firm resolution not to sin again, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Ask your confessor to help you with any difficulties you have in making a good confession. Say your penance promptly.

Necessary conditions for a sin to be mortal:

1. Serious Matter
2. Sufficient Reflection
3. Full Consent of the Will

Preliminary Considerations:

1. Have I ever deliberately failed to confess a past serious sin, or have I willfully disguised or hidden such a sin? **Note:** *The deliberate concealing of a mortal sin invalidates one's confession and makes the person guilty of another mortal sin. Remember that the confession is private under the Seal of Confession, i.e., it is a mortal sin for the priest to reveal the matter of one's confession to anyone else.*
2. Have I been guilty of irreverence for this sacrament by failing to examine my conscience carefully?
3. Have I failed to do the penance given to me by the priest?
4. Have I any habits of serious sin to confess first (e.g. impurity, drunkenness, etc.)?

As we accumulate sins, whether big or small, our conscience becomes desensitized to them and we develop callousness about evil. Where once we were repulsed by it, after some time and a variety of venial sins, we may find sinfulness to be routine or even attractive. A thorough examination of conscience can help us reform our conscience and our appreciation for the gravity of our sins.

An Examination of Conscience for Venial Sins

By Liz Estler, spiritualdirection.com;

Saint Anthony Mary Claret's Examination of Venial Sins

The soul should avoid all venial sins, especially those which pave the way for grave sin. It is not enough, my soul, to have a firm resolve to suffer death rather than consent to any grave sin. It is necessary to have a like resolution to venial sin.

He who does not find in himself this will, cannot have security. There is nothing which can give us such a certain security of eternal salvation as an uninterrupted cautiousness to avoid even the lightest venial sin, and a notable, all-extensive earnestness reaching to all practices of the spiritual life — earnestness in prayer, and in dealing with God; earnestness in mortification and self-denial; earnestness in being humble and in accepting contempt; earnestness in obeying and renouncing one's own self-will; earnest love of God and neighbor. He who wants to gain this earnestness and keep it, must necessarily have the resolve to always avoid especially the following venial sins:

1. The sin of giving entrance into your heart to *any* unreasonable suspicion or unfair judgment against your neighbor.
2. The sin of introducing talk about another's defects or offending charity in any other way, even lightly.
3. The sin of omitting out of laziness our spiritual practices or of performing them with voluntary neglect.

4. The sin of having a disordered affection for somebody.
5. The sin of having a vain esteem for oneself, or of taking vain satisfaction in things pertaining to us.
6. The sin of receiving the holy sacraments in a careless way, with distractions and other irreverences, and without a serious preparation.
7. Impatience, resentment, any failure to accept disappointments as coming from God's Hand; for this puts obstacles in the way of the decrees and dispositions of Divine Providence concerning us.
8. The sin of giving ourselves an occasion that can even remotely blemish a spotless condition of holy purity.
9. The fault of advertently hiding from those who ought to learn them, one's bad inclinations, weaknesses, and mortifications, seeking to pursue the road of virtue not under the direction of obedience, but under the guidance of one's own whims. Note: This speaks of times when we might have worthy [spiritual] direction if we seek it, but we prefer to follow our own dim lights.

An Examination of Conscience for Adults

Based on the Ten Commandments

I. I am the Lord your God, you shall not have false gods before me.

Have I...

- Disobeyed the commandments of God or the Church?
- Refused to accept what God has revealed as true, or what the Catholic Church proposes for belief?
- Denied the existence of God?
- Nourished and protected my faith?
- Deliberately misled others about doctrine or the faith?
- Rejected the Catholic faith, joined another Christian denomination, or joined or practiced another religion?
- Formally left the Catholic Church and/or joined a group forbidden to Catholics (Masons, communists, etc.)?
- Despaired about my salvation or the forgiveness of my sins?
- Presumed on God's mercy? (Committing a sin in expectation of forgiveness, or asking for forgiveness without conversion and practicing virtue.)
- Loved someone or something more than God (money, power, sex, ambition, etc.)?
- Engaged in superstitious practices and/or the occult? (Incl. horoscopes, fortune tellers, séances, Ouija board, worship of Satan, etc.)
- Hidden a serious sin or told a lie in confession?

II. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have I...

- Used the name of God in cursing or blasphemy?

- Failed to keep vows or promises that I have made to God?

Spoken about the Faith, the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence, hatred or defiance?

- Watched television or movies, or listened to music that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
- Used vulgar, suggestive or obscene speech?
- Belittled others in my speech?
- Behaved disrespectfully in Church?
- Misused places or things set apart for the worship of God?
- Committed perjury? (Breaking an oath or lying under oath.)
- Blamed God for my failings?

III. You shall keep holy the Sabbath day.

Have I...

- Set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
- Missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days (through own fault w/o sufficient reason)?
- Committed a sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament?
- Received a sacrament while in the state of mortal sin?
- Habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason?
- Shop, labor, or do business unnecessarily on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Not attend to taking my children to Mass?
- Knowingly eat meat on a forbidden day (or not fasting on a fast day)?

- Eat or drink within one hour of receiving Communion (other than medical need)?

IV. You shall honor your father and your mother.

Have I...

- Neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
- Neglected to give my children proper food, clothing, shelter, education, discipline and care (even after Confirmation)?
- Provided for the religious education and formation of my children for as long as they are under my care?
- Ensured that my children still under my care regularly frequent the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion?
- Provided my children with a positive, prudent and personalized education in the Catholic teaching on human sexuality?
- Been to my children a good example of how to live the Catholic Faith?
- Prayed with and for my children?
- Lived in humble obedience to those who legitimately exercise authority over me?
- Have I broken the law?
- Have I supported or voted for a politician whose positions are opposed to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church?

V. You shall not kill.

Have I...

- Unjustly and intentionally killed a human being?
- Been involved in an abortion, directly or indirectly (through advice, etc.)?
- Seriously considered or attempted suicide?
- Supported, promoted or encouraged the practice of assisted suicide or mercy killing?
- Deliberately desired to kill an innocent human being?

- Unjustly inflicted bodily harm on another person?

- Unjustly threatened another person with bodily harm?

Verbally or emotionally abused another person?

- Hated another person, or wished him evil?
- Been prejudiced, or unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, sex or religion?
- Joined a hate group?
- Purposely provoked another by teasing or nagging?
- Recklessly endangered my life or health, or that of another, by my actions?
- Driven recklessly or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
- Abused alcohol or other drugs?
- Sold or given drugs to others to use for non-therapeutic purposes?
- Used tobacco immoderately?
- Over-eaten?
- Encouraged others to sin by giving scandal?
- Helped another to commit a mortal sin (through advice, driving them somewhere, etc.)?
- Caused serious injury or death by criminal neglect?
- Indulged in serious anger?
- Refused to control my temper?
- Been mean to, quarreled with, or willfully hurt someone?
- Been unforgiving to others, when mercy or pardon was requested?
- Sought revenge or hoped something bad would happen to someone?
- Delighted to see someone else get hurt or suffer?
- Treated animals cruelly, causing them to suffer or die needlessly?

VI. You shall not commit adultery.

IX. You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.

Have I...

- Practiced the virtue of chastity?
 - Given in to lust? (The desire for sexual pleasure unrelated to spousal love in marriage.)
 - Used an artificial means of birth control or Sterilized my sex organs for contraceptive purposes?
 - Refused to be open to conception, without just cause? (*Catechism*, 2368)
 - Participated in immoral techniques for in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination?
 - Deprived my spouse of the marital right, without just cause or claimed my own marital right without concern for my spouse?
 - Deliberately caused male climax outside of normal sexual intercourse? (*Catechism*, 2366)
 - Willfully entertained impure thoughts?
 - Purchased, viewed, or made use of pornography?
 - Watched movies and television that involve sex and nudity?
 - Listened to music or jokes that are harmful to purity?
 - Committed adultery? (Sexual relations with someone who is married, or with someone other than my spouse.)
 - Committed incest? (Sexual relations with a relative or in-law.)
 - Committed fornication? (Sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex when neither of us is married.)
 - Engaged in homosexual activity? (Sexual activity with someone of the same sex.)
 - Committed rape?
 - Masturbated? (Deliberate stimulation of one's own sexual organs for sexual pleasure.)
- Engaged in sexual foreplay (petting) reserved for marriage?
- Preyed upon children or youth for my sexual pleasure?

- Engaged in unnatural sexual activities?
- Engaged in prostitution, or paid for the services of a prostitute?
- Seduced someone, or allowed myself to be seduced?
- Made uninvited and unwelcome sexual advances toward another?
- Purposely dressed immodestly?

VII. You shall not steal.

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

Have I...

- Stolen? (Take something that doesn't belong to me against the reasonable will of the owner.)
 - Envied others on account of their possessions?
 - Tried to live in a spirit of Gospel poverty and simplicity?
 - Given generously to others in need?
 - Considered that God has provided me with money so that I might use it to benefit others, as well as for my own legitimate needs?
 - Practiced the works of mercy?
 - Deliberately defaced, destroyed or lost
- Cheated on a test, taxes, sports, games, or in business?
 - Squandered money in compulsive gambling?
 - Make a false claim to an insurance company?
 - Paid my employees a living wage, or failed to give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
 - Failed to honor my part of a contract?
- Failed to make good on a debt?
 - Overcharge someone, especially to take advantage of another's hardship or ignorance?
 - Misused natural resources?

An Act of Contrition

O 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 offend 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