

How to go to Confession:

The priest welcomes you, the penitent, and then both make the sign of the cross, saying, **“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”**

It is appropriate at this point to tell the priest how long it has been since your last Confession, perhaps using the following words: **“Bless me father, for I have sinned. It’s been (how long?) since my last Confession.”**

Then you confess your sins – *be as honest and complete as you can* – too much detail is not necessary. After this, the priest may offer suitable advice to help you begin anew in the life of grace and how to avoid particularly challenging sins.

The priest will then give you a penance – a prayer or good deed that demonstrates your willingness to make up for the past, as well as help you begin again, seeking to avoid sin and grow in your relationship with God.

After this, you offer a prayer that expresses sorrow for your sins and the resolve not to sin again. This is called an Act of Contrition. Here’s an example you may use:

“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. And I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments. But most of all, because they offend You, my God, who are all 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 occasion of sin. Amen.”

Following this prayer, the priest will pray the words of absolution over you. It’s at this moment that Jesus forgives you your sins. The priest will bless you at the end. He will say: “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good”, to which you reply, **“For His mercy endures forever!”** Then the priest will tell you to go in peace, at which point you are free to leave. Don’t forget your penance.

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A Guide to Making a Good Confession

A good examination of conscience is a great help in making a good confession. We use an examination of conscience to help us call to mind our sins and failings during a period of quiet reflection before approaching the priest in Confession. It’s important for our examination of conscience to be **thorough**. This may even help us discover things that we were not aware of before. It’s also a chance to *develop* our conscience in light of God’s commandments.

To make an examination of conscience:

- Set aside some quiet time for reflection.
- Start by praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for help in making a good examination to prepare for Confession (Penance/Reconciliation).
- Read through the items on this list and honestly reflect on your behavior for each item.
- Consider if there is anything else to bring up or confess during your Confession
- If necessary, take this list or some brief notes to Confession to help you remember things – but keep it confidential

An examination of conscience traditionally follows the outline of the **Ten Commandments** :

The Ten Commandments

Commandments 1-3: “Your shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind” – Luke 10:27

[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?
- Do I make a god of anything or anyone else in my life?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices (ex. Ouija board, séances, fortune tellers), 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 ever received Holy Communion in a state of mortal (serious) sin?
- Have I ever 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 cursed?
- Have I been angry with God?
- Have I wished evil upon another person?
- Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?

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

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
- Do I do needless work on Sunday?

Commandments 4-10: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." – Luke 10:27

[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 my aged and infirm relatives?

[5] You shall not kill.

- Have I physically harmed anyone?
- Have I abused alcohol, drugs, or other anything else?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
- Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin?
- Have I been unjustly angry or resentful?
- Have I harbored hatred in my heart, perhaps holding on to grudges?
- Have I mutilated myself through any form of sterilization, or have I encouraged another in this?
- Have I mistreated my body through self-mutilation (such as cutting) or a lack of proper nourishment?

[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 (fornication)?
- Is my marriage recognized by the Catholic Church as being sacramentally valid?

- Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control in my marriage?
- Have I been guilty of masturbation?
- Have I sought to control my thoughts, or have I entertained lust?
- Have I respected each person's dignity, or have I thought of others as objects for pleasure or utility? Have I viewed pornography?
- 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 stolen 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 as promptly as possible?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor and others in need?

[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 what I think or say about others?
- Do I keep secret what should be confidential?

[9] You shall not desire your neighbor's spouse.

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, conversations, or Internet use?
- Have I viewed pornography in any format?
- 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, abilities, 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 of my material and spiritual needs?