

How To Go To Confession

[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?
- Have I been open to accept children lovingly from God?
- Have I been guilty of self-abuse/masturbation?
- Have I sought to control my thoughts?
- Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Have I engaged in homosexual activity?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words and actions?

[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 promptly?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?

[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 my thoughts of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?

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

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused them by the use of pornography?
- Do I seek to control my sexual 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 or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the main purpose of my life?
- Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?

Before You Go To Confession

Examine your conscience – that is, reflect on what sins you have committed. To guide you, make an “Examination of Conscience.” (See the other side of this page.) It’s quite acceptable to **make a list** and to bring that list with you to confession if that helps.

Once You Get to Confession

1. Introduction.

Entering the confessional, you may have a choice to kneel behind a screen or to sit, facing the priest. Begin by making **the Sign of the Cross** (praying the words out loud), and then by saying, **“Bless me, Father, I have sinned. It has been (say how long) since my last confession. These are my sins...”**

2. Confession.

List the sins you have committed that came to mind when doing your examination of conscience.

Don't be too general (like, “I haven't been a good person”) – but a lot of **detail is not necessary** either (you don't need to tell the whole story of how a sin came about). If you're not sure if something is a sin, just ask the priest. Remember, this isn't counseling, so unless you ask, the priest likely won't give you advice. He certainly may give you encouragement – and then, he'll move on to...

3. Penance.

The priest will suggest **something for you to do or to pray** as a response to God's mercy. You'll have to remember what this is and do it after the confession is over, so pay attention.

4. Contrition.

The priest will then ask you to pray your **'Act of Contrition'** demonstrating your sorrow for your sins. This **needs to be prayed out loud** for the priest to hear, but need not adhere exactly to one formula. Here are two examples (choose the one that suits you best):

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.*

OR:

*O my God, I am heartily sorry
for having offended you 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 you, my God,
who are all good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve with the help of your grace,
to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.*

5. Absolution.

Don't get up to leave after that prayer, because the best part is yet to come. The priest will extend his hands in your direction and he will pray the **Prayer of Absolution**: *"God, the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God grant you pardon and peace. And I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."*

You respond: Amen.

6. Conclusion.

The priest will then likely say something like, "God has freed you from your sin. Go in Peace." To which you can respond: **"Thanks be to God."**

After You Leave...

Don't forget to **do your penance**. If it is saying certain prayers, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.

An Examination of Conscience Prior to Making a Good Confession

[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?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices or with the occult?
- Do I seek to surrender myself to God's Word as taught by the Church?
- Have I ever received Communion in a state of mortal 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 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?

[4] Honour your Father and your Mother.

- Do I honour 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 had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
- Have I physically harmed anyone?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs?
- Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin?
- Have I been angry or resentful?
- Have I harbored hatred in my heart?
- Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization?