

The Sacrament of Confession



I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.
(Luke 15:7)

A Guide for Reconciliation

(last edited 11/20/25)

Examination of Conscience

The Ten Commandments:

I. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.

- Have I denied the existence of God?
- Does someone or something other than God influence my choices?
- Have I doubted or denied my faith?
- Have I rejected the Christian faith, associating myself formally with another religion?
- Have I received communion at a non-Catholic service?
- Have I engaged in superstitions or occult practices?

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?
- Have I failed to keep the vows or promises that I have made to God?
- Have I spoken about the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence, hatred, or defiance?
- Have I watched television or movies, or listened to music that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
- Have I been disrespectful in my behavior in Church?

III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Have I set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
- Have I missed Mass on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Did I habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason?
- Have I fasted one hour before receiving Communion?
- Have I received a sacrament while in a state of mortal sin?
- Did I do unnecessary shopping and business on Sunday and the other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Do I do penance every Friday, if not abstaining from meat, then some other form of penance?
- If I am 14 years of age or older, did I abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent?
- If I am between the ages of 18 to 59, did I fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?

IV. Honor your father and mother.

- If still under the care of my parents, did I obey all that they reasonably asked of me?
- Have I neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
- Did I live in humble obedience to those who legitimately exercise authority over me?
- Have I provided for the religious education and formation of my children for as long as they are under my care?
- Have I broken the law?

V. You shall not kill.

- Have I intentionally killed a human being?
- Have I procured, performed, cooperated, or advised another in the intentional killing of an unborn child through abortion?
- Have I seriously considered or attempted suicide?
- Have I unjustly inflicted bodily harm on another person?
- Have I afflicted another person with verbal or emotional abuse?
- Have I failed to forgive?
- Have I harbored hatred, anger, or resentment?
- Am I prejudiced or have I unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, gender, or religion?
- Did I, by my actions, recklessly endanger my life or health, or that of another person?
- Have I gotten drunk or abused drugs?
- Do I endanger my health by not eating right or exercising?
- Have I encouraged others to sin by giving scandal?

VI. You shall not commit adultery.

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

- Have I committed adultery, having sexual relations with someone who is married, or with someone other than my spouse?
- Have I committed fornication, having sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex when neither of us is married?

- Have I committed sodomy or had sexual relations with someone of my own sex?
- Have I raped someone?
- Have I committed masturbation (impurity with self), using my sexual organs for my own sexual pleasure?
- Have I engaged in sexual foreplay reserved for marriage?
- Have I used artificial means of birth control?
- Have I undergone an operation to render myself sterile for contraceptive purposes?
- Have I willfully entertained impure thoughts?
- Have I purchased or made use of pornography in any form?
- Have I watched movies and television that involve sex and nudity?
- Have I listened to music or jokes that are harmful to purity?
- Have I set out to seduce someone, or allowed myself to be seduced?
- Have I made uninvited and unwelcome sexual advances toward another?
- Have I purposely dressed immodestly?
- Am I living in a valid and licit marriage according to the laws of the Catholic Church?
- Have I given scandal by living with a member of the opposite sex without the benefit of marriage?

VII. You shall not steal.

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

- Did I take something that doesn't belong to me?
- Did I deface, destroy, or lose another's property without making restitution?
- Did I cheat on a test, on my taxes, or in business?
- Do I pay employees a living wage, or fail to give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
- Did I take advantage of another's hardship or ignorance by charging more for a product than it is worth?
- Have I squandered money in compulsive gambling?
- Am I envious of others on account of their possessions?
- Have I misused natural resources?
- Do I contribute my time, talent, and money to support the poor, my parish, and the work of the Church?

VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Have I deceived another by lying?
- Did I perjure myself under oath?
- Am I guilty of passing gossip?
- Am I guilty of detraction, destroying a person's reputation by telling others about his faults for no good reason?
- Am I guilty of slander or calumny, telling lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation?

- Am I guilty of rash judgement, assuming the worst of another person based on circumstantial evidence?
- Have I failed to make reparation for a lie I told, or for harm done to a person's reputation?
- Did I betray another's confidence through speech?

Steps for making a good Confession:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to know your sins.
2. Examine your conscience.
3. Express in prayer your sorrow for having committed these sins or pray for the help to be truly sorry.
4. Resolve not to commit these sins again, and to avoid the situations that lead to sin.
5. Confess your sins to the priest.
6. Pray or perform the penance the priest gives you as soon as possible

Prayer Before 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 contrite heart. Help me to firmly resolve not to commit them again. O Blessed Virgin, Mother of my Redeemer, mirror of innocence and sanctity, and refuge of penitent sinners, 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 most miserable sinner, that I may repent from my evil ways, that my heart may henceforth be forever united with yours in eternal love. Amen.

A Quick Guide to Confession

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit + May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be in your heart and on your lips to help you make a good Confession.

1. Penitent: **“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been ____ months since my last confession. These are my sins...”**
2. Tell Father your sins.
3. Penitent: After saying your last sin, say: **“I’m sorry for these sins and any I may have forgotten.”**
4. Priest: Father will give you some advice or encouragement.
5. Priest: He will give you a penance to do.
6. Priest: He will ask you to say the Act of Contrition.
7. Penitent: **Act of Contrition** (see below.)
8. Priest: He will give you absolution, closing by saying: **“Your sins are forgiven, go in peace.”**
9. Penitent: **Thank you, Father.**
10. Penitent: Leave the confessional and do your penance as soon as possible.

Act of Contrition:

O my God I am heartily sorry for having offended You. 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 occasions of sin. Amen.