

not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.—*Romans 5:1-5, 8-11*

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.—*2 Corinthians 5:17*

Be willing to talk openly with your God of mercy, who wants to speak words of pardon and lavish his graces on you. —*St. Faustina Kowalska*

You are precious to him. He loves you, and he loves you so tenderly that he has carved you on the palm of his hand. These are God's words written in the Scripture. You know that. Remember that when your heart feels restless, when your heart feels hurt, when your heart feels like breaking—then remember, “I am precious to him. He loves me. He has called me by my name. I am his. He loves me. God loves me.” And to prove that love he died on the cross.—*Mother Teresa*

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.—*St. Augustine of Hippo*

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

1. Examine your conscience.

Before you come to the priest, spend some time in prayer. Think about how long it has been since your last confession, and try to remember as best you can the sins that you have committed since then. Use the Ten Commandments as a guide. Ask God for the grace of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

2. Come to the priest.

When you come to the priest, you will usually have the option of going anonymously behind a screen (the traditional way) or face-to-face (the more modern way). When you are settled in the confessional, begin by making the Sign of the Cross. The priest might then offer you some words of welcome.

3. Say how long it has been since your last confession.

You should tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession. The traditional formula for doing this is to say: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned, it has been [length of time] since my last confession. These are my sins.”

4. Confess your sins to the priest.

You must make an integral confession. That is, you must confess all of the mortal sins that you can remember since your last confession, together with the number of times that you did each one, as well as any relevant circumstances that affect the gravity of the sins. It is also good to confess as many of your venial sins as you can remember, though this is not strictly necessary. Many people find it helpful to confess their hardest sins first.

The priest may ask you questions for clarification. You may also ask him questions if you need clarification.

You do not need to elaborate on irrelevant circumstances, make excuses for your actions, or confess other people's sins. Good confessions are simple, direct, and humble.

When you are finished confessing your sins, signal this by saying, *“For these and all the sins of my past life I am truly sorry.”*

5. The priest may give you some encouragement or advice, and he will then impose a penance.

A *penance* is some work (usually saying prayers) that you perform in order to redress the harm to yourself and others caused by your sins. The forgiveness of your sins does not technically depend on performance of the penance, but performing the penance is a privileged moment for growing in grace and holiness. You should perform the penance as soon as possible. You *must* perform it before your next confession.

6. The priest will then invite you to pray the act of contrition.

The *act of contrition* is a prayer that you say to God to express sorrow for your sins. It is a good idea to learn the act of contrition by heart. There are many versions of the act of contrition. Here are two of the most common:

(Option One) *O 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.*

REFLECTIONS FOR CONFESSION

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy...The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love...He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.—*Psalms 103*

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. —*Isaiah 1:18*

I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put in them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.—*Ezekiel 11:19-20*

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” Just so, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.—*Luke 15:4-6*

Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does

- Have I, deliberately and with full consent of the will, entertained sexual thoughts about another person?
- Have I dressed immodestly?

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

The tenth commandment requires of us a right attitude toward our neighbor and his goods. It disposes us to live in peace and harmony with others in society.

- Am I envious or jealous of another person?
- Am I selfish?

(Option Two) O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all of 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.

8. The priest will pray the prayer of absolution.

The prayer of absolution is when Jesus Christ, working through the priest, gives you forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, and new life. This is the prayer that he prays:

God the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to Himself, and has 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.

9. The priest will dismiss you.

When the priest gives you words of dismissal, respond, “*Thanks be to God.*” Remember to thank God in prayer, and to perform your penance as soon as you can.

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

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

The first commandment prohibits all idolatry and false worship. This includes not just superstitious and occult practices, but also all of the other “idols” that we make of created things, whenever we prefer them to God. The first commandment challenges us to a whole-hearted love of God which includes regular prayer, study of the faith, and bearing public witness to God in the name of Jesus Christ.

- What are the things in my life that are more important to me than God is?
- Do I bear witness to my Catholic faith in all that I say and do?
- Am I ever ashamed to be a public witness to Jesus Christ and the truths of my faith?
- Do I have a regular habit of prayer?
- Do I read the Bible regularly?
- Have I taken the responsibility to learn the truths of the Catholic faith?
- Have I engaged in any superstitious or occult practices (fortune telling, ouija boards, “games” to summon occult forces, etc.)

2. You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.

The second commandment prohibits all disrespectful language as well as all sacrilegious use of holy things and holy places. The commandment challenges us to live our lives in a spirit of reverence for the sacred.

- Have I given the poor what is rightfully theirs by sharing my excess money and goods with them, according to my state in life?
- Do I use other people for my own advantage?

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

The eighth commandment prohibits all lying, fraud, and deceit. It also teaches us to love the truth, and to respect the dignity of others by sharing the truth with them.

- Have I calumniated anyone? That is, have I deliberately and publicly said something that I knew to be false about another person? Have I restored this person’s reputation?
- Have I told a lie?
- Have I been misleading or deceptive to anyone, especially people in authority over me?
- Do I have or use a fake ID?
- Do I misrepresent my identity online?
- Do I rank myself ahead of others, or consider myself to be “better” than others?
- Do I hold other people in contempt?

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

The ninth commandment forbids all illicit sexual desire. More positively, it teaches us to order our affections aright and to treat the bodies of other people with respect and dignity.

- Have I looked at any pornographic, sexually-explicit, or otherwise indecent material on the Internet or on television?
- Have I read indecent books or other materials?

- Have I talked disrespectfully about sexual matters?
- Have I talked disrespectfully or immodestly about another person's body?
- Do I make degrading comments about people of the opposite sex?

7. You shall not steal.

The seventh commandment prohibits taking, damaging, or misusing another person's property in any way. This includes the person's good name, which is the most valuable possession that he has. This commandment teaches us a proper respect for another person's goods.

- Have I stolen anything? Have I made restitution?
- Have I vandalized another person's property? Have I made restitution?
- Have I caused unjust damage to another person's property? Have I made restitution?
- Have I harmed anyone's reputation or good name with my words?
- Have I damaged the relationship between two people with tale-bearing?
- Have I gossiped about anyone?
- Have I given my consent to reviling, derision, tale-bearing, or gossip by standing idly by while it took place or by tolerating it in any way?
- Do I work diligently at school, or do I waste time?
- Have I neglected my duties as a student?
- Do I offer steady and diligent work to my employer, or do I slack off at work?
- Am I generous with my time and talent when other people ask for my assistance?

- Have I misused the name of God? Of Jesus, Mary, or the saints?
- Have I mistreated a religious object?
- Have I shown disrespect or irreverence in a sacred place?
- Have I talked about religious subjects in a mocking or disrespectful way?
- Do I have a habit of using foul language?
- Have I received Holy Communion while conscious of grave sin, without having first received sacramental absolution?

3. You shall keep holy the Sabbath day.

The third commandment enjoins us to render the debt of thanksgiving that we owe to God by offering to him the sacrifice of the Eucharist. This commandment invites us to celebrate our identity as the chosen people of God, free from the tyranny of toil, able to rest as he did.

- Have I missed Mass on a Sunday or a holy day of obligation?
- Do I leave Mass early (for example, after Communion)?
- Do I refuse to participate actively and prayerfully at Mass?
- Do I show proper respect and reverence at Mass?
- Do I disrupt the celebration liturgy or people who are trying to pray at Mass?
- Am I stubborn or uncooperative about going to Mass with my family?
- Have I performed any unnecessary work on Sunday?

4. You shall honor your father and mother.

The fourth commandment requires us to respect our parents, and by extension, all of those authorities who have the responsibility to care for the common good. The fourth commandment is meant to

bring about in us a respect for all of the communities in which we live and through which we flourish. It is the only commandment with a promise: “that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”

- Have I disobeyed my parents?
- Have I broken any of my parents’ rules?
- Am I cooperative in my home and family life?
- Do I talk back to my parents, raise my voice to them, or insult them with my words?
- Do I talk badly about my parents when they are not present?
- Does my behavior cause my parents unnecessary worry, anxiety, or grief?
- Have I broken any civil laws?
- Have I obeyed all the rules of my school?
- Have I obeyed all of those in authority over me (school administrators, teachers, coaches, employers, etc.) Have I shown them the proper respect?

5. You shall not kill.

The fifth commandment prohibits not only direct killing, but all harm done to ourselves or to another person by word and by deed. This commandment invites us to do justice to our neighbor, to love him, and to forgive him.

- Have I caused physical harm to anyone?
- Have I caused physical harm to myself? Tried to kill myself?
- Have I had an abortion or helped someone to have an abortion?
- Do I drive recklessly?
- Have I driven under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

- Have I used any alcohol at all, not under the supervision of my parents?
- Have I sold illegal drugs? (This includes marijuana).
- Have I used illegal drugs? (This includes marijuana).
- Have I misused prescription drugs?
- Have I been in any fights or arguments?
- Have I used angry words towards another person?
- Do I cultivate hatreds or nourish resentments and grudges towards another person?
- Is there anyone whom I need to forgive?
- Have I bullied anyone by words, by actions, or online?
- Have I given my consent to bullying by standing idly by while it took place or by tolerating it in any way?
- Do I make fun of people to their faces or behind their backs?
- Do I show prejudice to people on account of their race, religious beliefs, social status, etc.?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

The sixth commandment forbids all sexual misuse of oneself or another person. It instills in us a respect for the great gift of human sexuality, in which a husband and a wife, through their loving union, share with God the awesome task of creating a new human life.

- Have I had sexual intercourse outside of marriage?
- Have I had oral or anal sex?
- Have I gone to indecent places (strip clubs, adult stores, etc.)?
- Have I “gone too far” in romantic contact with another person?
- Have I masturbated?