

How to make a good Confession

It is always important to come to Confession prepared, and that preparation happens by intentionally taking time beforehand to *examine one's conscience*. It does the penitent no good – quite the opposite, in fact – to approach our Lord in the Sacrament of His Mercy having no understanding of where they need our Lord's mercy and healing. In short, walk into the confessional knowing and ready to confess your sins. It can also be helpful to write down your sins on a piece of paper, so that you do not forget. If you do accidentally forget to mention a sin that you had intended to confess, rest assured that it has been absolved. However, it is a sacrilege to *intentionally* withhold any sin in a Confession.

Once you are inside the confessional...

1. Begin with the sign of the Cross.
2. Say to the priest, **“Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been ### (days/weeks/months/years) since my last confession.”**
3. Then begin to confess your sins. Be sure to state all mortal sins in kind as well as the frequency committed.
4. Let the priest know that you have finished your confession by stating these or similar words, **“For these and all the sins of my past life, I am truly sorry.”**
5. The priest may offer some words of advice and/or encouragement. Then he will give you a penance and invite you to make an **Act of Contrition**.
6. The priest will then impart Absolution. Finally, he will state, “Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven.”
7. You respond, **“Thanks be to God!!!”**

NOTE: It is not necessary nor encouraged to justify/explain why any sin has been committed during a Confession. The penitent should simply and succinctly state his/her own sins. Also, Confession is not the place to talk about anything other than the matter of one's confession. If you wish to talk to the priest about other things, you're invited to set-up an appointment once Confessions have finished. Please respect the Sacrament for what it is (Reconciliation to God and His Church) and what it is not (counselling, socializing, etc.).

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because of 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 sin no more, to do penance, and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

Examination of Conscience for Adults

*“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”
~Luke 15:7*

Having to do with the Catholic life of virtue:

1. Does everything in my life give glory to God? Do I always and intentionally seek to glorify Him through my speech, thoughts, desires, and actions? Do I seek God’s glory through how I approach work, my attitude at home, while driving, the grocery store, the gas station and other places I choose to frequent/visit? Is the greater glory of God at the heart of my interactions with family, friends, co-workers, and complete strangers? Could everyone with whom I have interacted easily assume that Jesus is the center of my life?
2. Do I participate in Mass, go each Sunday and Holy Day of obligation, go to Confession at least once p/ year, fast and abstain as directed by the Church? Do I approach all these duties wholeheartedly all the time?
3. Have I lied to others? Have I told half-truths to exonerate myself of a situation? Have been honest with myself, or do I sometimes lie to myself so that I do not have to face my imperfections, shortcomings, vices, etc., or feel inadequate by asking for needed help?
4. Do I fast and pray for those who do not practice their Catholic Faith, particularly grown children, siblings, spouses, or other family members?
5. Have I offended God in the Eucharist by receiving it unworthily (i.e. w/ un-absolved mortal sins on my soul) and/or encouraged others to receive the Eucharist who outwardly live in opposition to the law of God? Do I use God’s name in vain?
6. Do I blame God and others for problems whose causes rightly belong to me?
7. Have I committed acts of impurity with myself? Have I viewed pornography? Have I committed sins of lust in my heart and mind?
8. If I am single, have I engaged in sexual acts with another person? Have I avoided all occasions for such a sin to take place? With God’s help, am I intentionally seeking to control and master all my desires and passions especially through the virtue of chastity?
9. If I am married, have I always entered the marital embrace with care, respect, awareness, and joy? Do I seek only to express my love and gift-of-self in the marital embrace, or do I engage in it (at least in part) for reasons of self-gratification and selfishness?
10. If I am married, do I give a full and faithful witness to the Sacrament of Marriage in my own marriage? Have I been physically and emotionally faithful to my spouse? Do I allow frustrations and resentments to fester in my marriage? Do I call my spouse derogatory names or show disrespect in other ways? Do I lose my temper and/or nag? Do I pray with and for my spouse?
11. If I am married, is my marriage the top priority of my life? Do other commitments such as work, children, grandchildren, sports and extracurricular activities set the top priority of my family’s life?
12. Do I support others in their marriage and family? Do I concretely challenge my friends and family to be better spouses, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles? Do I affirm couples in their marital qualities rather than ignore them or foster envy of them?
13. Do I shelter and defend my child so much that I have neglected to teach my child to courageously confront their peers in a way that shows concern and might benefit that peer’s well-being and salvation?
14. Do I regularly make time to study my Faith by reading Scripture, the Catechism, books about the Sacraments, prayer, morality, history, the saints, and the like? Do I blame others when I encounter a question of faith that I cannot answer?
15. Do I neglect my duties to pass on the faith in a clear and articulate way to others, especially to my children?

16. Do I approach all good things in moderation and with freedom of heart? Food? Money? Alcohol? Leisure? T.V.? Internet/Social Media? Work? Hobbies? Or do these things and other good things like them *control* my life sporadically or even habitually?
17. Do I needlessly worry about having the esteem and respect of others? Do I brag or “fish” for compliments? Am I content to just “be” in the presence of others, or do I actively look for opportunities to insert my own opinions, accomplishments, etc., in order “prove” myself worthy, honorable, capable, etc.?
18. Am I judgmental of people? Am I impatient when people do not live up to my expectations/standards? Am I able to see that all people are perfectly created in the image and likeness of God?

Having to do with one’s relationship with and life in God:

1. Do I give quality time to personal prayer each day? Do I pray for those for whom I have promised to pray? Have I taken time to teach my children how to pray and do I pray with them each day?
2. Do I care enough to positively *want* to become a saint by working with and not against God’s Grace? Am I dangerously satisfied with being “good enough” rather than striving toward perfection in love, virtue, and holiness through the help of God’s Grace? Before God (and others), do I seek to banish every ounce of pride within me?
3. Do I presume on God’s mercy? Do I believe God will simply forgive my mistakes/sins without me asking for His forgiveness? Do I avoid regular and personal encounters with Jesus in the Sacrament of Confession because I presumptuously believe it to be unnecessary? Do I presume that God will simply save and welcome me into Heaven without me also engaging the work of my salvation with fear and trembling?
4. Do I seek God’s holy and good will? Do I trust that every aspect of my life is providentially ordained by God to bring about my complete union with Him and my eternal happiness with Him? Have I ever given into the sometimes-tempting belief that God is punishing me due to experienced miseries? Do I offer back to God each day my work, thoughts, desires, joys, sorrows, frustrations, and all occasions for suffering?
5. Have I underutilized or even wasted the many specific Graces God showers upon me?
6. Am I grateful to God always? Am I grateful for my Catholic Faith? Am I grateful to others who care and pray for me? Have I been ungrateful of God’s blessings to me and so permitted myself to become jealous of another’s life and/or possessions?
7. Have I doubted God’s plan and intensely focused personal concern of me? Have I gone to fortune tellers, used ouija boards and/or tarot cards, or otherwise engaged in occult practices/magic?
8. Do I engage in conversations and/or forms of entertainment that do harm and weaken the gift of Faith God has given to me through my Baptism?

Having to do with social responsibilities:

1. Am I aware of the problems facing the county in which we live? If so, do I only complain about the problems rather than engaging an actual solution through word and action?
2. Do I complain about people taking advantage of the welfare system, yet never lend my time, knowledge, and expertise to help someone actually on welfare?
3. Do I claim to be against abortion and yet get frustrated when the cries and voices of children break my concentration? Do I claim to be pro-life, yet intentionally remove God, who is the author of life, from the procreative act of marital love through use of contraceptives?
4. Do I gladly accept the often-burdensome work and services of immigrants in restaurants, construction, landscaping and other jobs, yet do not view them as human beings when it comes to politics?

5. Do I welcome opportunities to help those less fortunate than I? Do I support worthy and moral charities?
6. Do I believe that I “deserve” the good things in my life, and/or believe that I “deserve” better? At times, do I act with entitlement?
7. Do I gossip? Do I spread rumors about people that have only a partial basis in truth or no basis at all? When I have a problem with another person, have I acted with pride and without charity and courage by not communicating with them directly? Have I perhaps, in turn, “vented” those issue to someone else? Do I say vicious things about people behind their back?
8. Do I hold grudges and wish bad things upon people who have hurt me or those I care about?

Having to do with parish responsibilities:

1. Do I sacrifice my money, my time, and gifts for our Lord and His parish? Or do I make excuses to feel better about myself for not sacrificing?
2. Have I simply allowed others to take care of parish maintenance, the school, other ministries, socials, and other events? Have I *apathetically* accepted what Jesus Christ and past generations of Catholics have given me through our parish? Have I neglected to accept that I too am responsible and obliged to pass on a parish life and campus that meets the changed needs of today and anticipated needs tomorrow?
3. Do I readily volunteer to help the mission of our parishes, or do I wait for a personal invitation?
4. Does *my* convenience dictate how and when I will participate in the Sacramental, pastoral, and social life of our parishes?
5. Am I praying and working to ensure that our parishes and school do not become unsustainable and die out within the next generation?
6. Have I worked to heal divisions between another parishioner and I?
7. Do I exclude others? Do I belong to a clique and refuse to allow anyone else in?