

PREPARING FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

As you prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your conscience well by prayerfully reviewing your conduct in light of the Commandments and the example of Christ. Ask Him, “Lord, reveal and bring to my mind any sin(s) or area(s) of my life that keep me separated from You or wound my relationship with You?”

The questions in this pamphlet should assist you in making a thorough review. Tell the priest the specific kind of sins you have committed and, to the best of your ability, how many times you have committed them since your last good confession.

To make a good confession, you need to confess any mortal (gravely serious) sins you have committed, since you can obtain forgiveness for your venial (not unto death) sins by sacrifices, acts of charity, prayer, receiving the Eucharist, and other pious actions. Confession of venial sins, however, is indispensable for avoiding sin and advancing in holiness toward Heaven. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: “Mortal sin is sin whose object is *grave matter* and which is also *committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent*” (CCC 1857). If you are in doubt about whether a sin is mortal or venial, mention it to the priest.

Remember that God loves you as a beloved son or daughter. The point of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be restored to a relationship of holiness with this God who loves you. So, as you examine your conscience, focus more on the “God of the commandments” than the “commandments of God.” For that reason, ask God the Holy Spirit to give you real sorrow for the sins you’ve committed out of love for God and a deep resolve, out of sorrow, to try never to commit these sins again.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Catholics for centuries have found it profitable to examine their consciences in light of the Ten Commandments. Penitents are encouraged to expand on them in their prayerful review of their conduct.

FIRST COMMANDMENT

"I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME:"

- Have I denied the existence of God?
- Have I guarded & protected my faith by staying away from anything that will lead me to sin or disbelief?
- Have I presumed on God’s mercy (purposely commit or persist in a sin/s knowing that God will forgive me anyway)?
- Have I really loved God above all things, or have I made other things like: money, job, clothes, car, hobbies, TV, music, pleasure, peer approval — more important than God?
- Have I made time for God each day in prayer? Do I pray only when I need something or do I also seek to praise and thank Him?
- Have I made a serious effort to get to know my faith well (reading the Bible, Catechism, papal docs., lives of the saints, etc.)?
- Have I endangered my faith in God by any superstitious or evil practices, like witchcraft, séances, Wicca, Ouija boards, fortune tellers, tarot cards, horoscopes, palm reading, etc.?

- Wholeheartedly accept and follow all of the Church’s teachings, or do I only pick and choose the teachings that please me?
- Have I rejected a Church teaching, rather than seek understanding from a priest or looking in the Catholic Catechism?
- Do I believe the false idea that one religion is just as good as another (Indifferentism)?
- Have I denied my faith before others? Have I been willing to affirm, defend and practice my faith before others and not just in private?
- Failed to speak out in defense of the Catholic Faith or Church?
- Have I treated blessed or sacred objects disrespectfully (crucifix, bible, rosary, religious statues, etc.)?

SECOND COMMANDMENT

"YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN"

- Do I love and have reverence for God’s Name?
- Have I used God’s name carelessly, in anger or in surprise?
- Have I called down evil on anyone?
- Have I used foul language? Or belittled others in speech?
- Do I try my best to fulfill the promises and resolutions that I have made toward God, especially those of my Baptism and Confirmation?
- Have I shown disrespect for the Church, Blessed Virgin Mary, saints, or those who have consecrated their lives to God?

THIRD COMMANDMENT

"REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH DAY"

- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation through my own fault?
- Have I really prayed and paid attention during Holy Mass or have I just gone through the motions?
- Do I participate at Mass by singing and praying the responses, or do I simply sit as a spectator wanting to be entertained? Do I pay attention to the Word of God and try to apply it to my life?
- Have I arrived at Mass late due to carelessness or left Mass early without a serious reason?
- Have I kept the Eucharistic fast before Holy Mass (no food or drink, except water 1hr. before receiving the Eucharist)?
- Have I received Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin?
- Did I do work on Sunday that was not necessary? Have I used Sunday just as part of the “weekend” or as a day for acts of love toward God, my family and those in need?

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER"

- Have I neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
- Have I provided for the religious education & formation of my children: taking them to Mass each week, instructing them in all the teachings of the Church, and modeling the faith for them?
- Provided my children with a positive, prudent and personalized education in the Catholic teaching on human sexuality?
- Have I neglected to give my children proper food, clothing, shelter, education, discipline and care?

- Have I disrespected my family members or treated them poorly, by insulting, mocking, ridiculing them?
- Have I supported or voted for a politician whose positions are opposed to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church?
- Do I try to bring happiness and peace to my family or do I cause tension and division?
- Do I make time to visit my elderly relatives and those in poor health? Have I disciplined my children in anger rather than love?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"YOU SHALL NOT KILL."

- Have I killed, physically harmed someone, or tried to do so? Have I been violent in my words or actions?
- Have I intentionally cut or harmed my body, forgetting that it is meant to be a Temple of God?
- Have I done drugs, allowed myself to become intoxicated or done other things that damage my health?
- Am I addicted to anything (alcohol, gambling, drugs, food, etc.)?
- Have I put others down to feel better about myself?
- Have I caused another to sin (on purpose or as a result of my sin)?
- Have I held grudges or tried to get even with others? Have I hated or failed to forgive, or harbored unforgiveness in my heart?
- Do I get angry easily and lose my temper? Do I act rudely, impolitely or arrogantly toward others?
- Did I attempt suicide or entertain thoughts of taking my life?
- Did I have an abortion, or encourage or help someone else to have one?
- Have I harmed animals, littered or been destructive to the environment?

SIXTH & NINTH COMMANDMENTS

"YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"

"YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE"

- Have I remained chaste and pure in mind and body?
- Do I understand and appreciate the gift of my sexuality and desire to save the gift of myself for marriage (if not married)?
- Did I deliberately look at pornography or any other impure TV programs, computer sites, videos, pictures, or movies?
- Have I touched or kissed another person lustfully?
- Have I treated others, in my deeds or thoughts, as objects?
- Did I commit impure acts with myself (masturbation), or with others through adultery (sex with a married person), fornication (any sex outside marriage-including oral sex), or any homosexual activity?
- Have I been an occasion of sin for others by acting or dressing immodestly?
- Do I believe and have reverence for the institution of marriage as God made it: a union by God between one man and one woman forever?
- Used any form of birth control? Refused to be open to conception?
- Participated in any immoral techniques for in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination? Sterilized my sex organs for contraceptive purposes?
- Live(d) with someone without being married by the Church (living with someone romantically outside of marriage)?
- Live(d) in a marriage not blessed by the Catholic Church?

- Have I used any money to buy/support the sex industry?
- Claimed my own marital right without concern for my spouse?
Deprived my spouse of the marital right, without just cause?
- Abandoned my spouse and family by separation or divorce?

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

"YOU SHALL NOT STEAL"

"YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS"

- Have I been greedy or jealous of the material things others have?
Do I resent their popularity or success or talents?
- Did I shoplift, steal or take things that didn't belong to me?
- Did I receive stolen goods? Have I returned or made restitution for things I have stolen?
- Did I damage others' property without owning up to it and repairing it?
- Have I cheated on my taxes? Have I paid all debts owed?
- Have I "forgotten" to return something I borrowed?
- Have I wasted money, goods or food?
- Do I generously share what I have with the needy?
- Do I use the money I have responsibly?
- Have I been lazy or wasted time in my job?
- Am I generous in supporting the mission of the Church? Do I participate with my time, talents and treasure in the apostolic and charitable works of my parish community?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR"

- Have I lied? Keep my promises? Break a secret/confidence?
- Have I injured another's reputation by lying about them or hurt others by revealing true hidden faults about them?
- Have I judged others, or gossiped, or spread rumors?
- Have I failed to build-up or encourage someone in need?
- Did I insult or tease others intending to hurt them?
- Have I had a spirit of love and compassion toward others?
- Have I been a source of division rather than of unity?

OTHER SINS

- Did I intentionally refuse to mention some grave sin in my previous confessions?
- Have I helped others when they've needed it?
- Have I waited patiently on God, or do I take things into my own hands when I'm praying for someone or something?
- Have I been prideful and always seek to have my own way?
- Do I cling to my sin(s) even when God convicts me to repent?
- Have I fulfilled my obligation to go to Confession at least once a year and of going worthily to Holy Communion at least during the Easter season?
- Did I fast on Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday?
- Did I abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent?
- Do I keep all Fridays throughout the year as penitential days? (if not abstaining from meat, do I offer another sacrifice in its place?)
- Have I driven recklessly, putting myself & others in danger?
- Do I fail to trust in God's goodness, or His plan for my life?
- Have I lost hope or given in to despair?
- Have I failed to trust in God's mercy by thinking that I cannot be forgiven for a sin or multiple sins I've committed?

GOING TO CONFESSION

The penitent (you) and the priest begin with the sign of the Cross: Make the Sign of the Cross, saying:
In the Name of the Father + and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Then the penitent states:

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (however many days, weeks, months or years), since my last confession. And these are my sins: (List them)

The penitent then states his or her sins to the priest...

For the confession to be valid, the penitent must:

1. *Confess all of the mortal sins he/she is aware of having committed since the last confession (in kind and number)*
2. *Be heartily sorry for the sins committed*
3. *Have a firm purpose of amendment of life (try not to commit the same sins in the future)*

After this, the priest will generally give some advice to the penitent and impose a penance.

Then the priest will ask the penitent to make an act of Contrition:

ACT OF CONTRITION

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, do penance, and amend my life. Amen.

After this, the priest will absolve the penitent in the following words:

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 give 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.

The penitent makes the sign of the Cross and answers:
Amen

The priest will then dismiss the penitent by saying: "Go in peace." The penitent will then respond:

Thanks be to God.

Then the penitent immediately fulfills the penance assigned.

SAINT PHILIP CHURCH

ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

A GUIDE FOR ADULTS

HELP IN MAKING A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE AND A GOOD CONFESSION

"Those who have been far away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love, I make this appeal: Come back to this source of grace; Do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you. He will heal you and you will be at peace with God." **POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II**



"When you go to Confession, to this fountain of My mercy, the Blood and Water which came forth from My Heart always flows down upon your soul and exalts it. Every time you go to Confession, immerse yourself entirely in My mercy, with great trust, so that I may pour the bounty of My grace upon your soul. When you approach the confessional, know this, that I Myself am waiting there for you. I am only hidden by the priest, but I Myself act in your soul. Here the misery of the soul meets the God of Mercy. Tell souls that from this fount of mercy, souls draw graces solely with the vessel of trust. If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity." **ST. FAUSTINA**