

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 loved God with all my mind, heart, soul, and strength?
- Do I thank Him for all that He does for me?
- Have I made time for prayer each day?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?
- Have I denied the existence of God?
- Do I put my trust in superstitions, good luck charms, rather than God alone?
- Do I take opportunities to help others?
- Do I try to learn about God from my parents, my teachers, from going to Mass, and reading the Bible?
- Have I rejected any Church teaching or denied that I was Catholic?
- Have I guarded and protected my faith?

- Have I loved God above all things? Even more than games, TV, electronic devices, etc.
- Have I made an idol of sports or entertainment figures?
- Have I treated blessed or sacred objects disrespectfully (crucifix, bible, rosary, religious statues, etc.)?
- 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?
- Do I believe the false idea that all religions are basically as good as another?
- Have I ever presumed on God’s mercy (treating sin casually, thinking that God will forgive me anyway)?

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?
- Do I show my love for God by loving others?
- Have I used the words “God” or “Jesus” carelessly or irreverently, in anger or surprise?
- Have I used bad/foul language? Have I sworn?
- Have I wished evil on another?
- Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, the Church and 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?
- Did my behavior make it difficult or impossible for my parents to get to church on time?
- Do I remind myself that I am in God’s house, and behave as I should? Have I fooled around during Mass?
- Do I arrive at Church late or leave early?
- Do I try to be reverent and pay attention during Mass?
- Do I make Sunday a day of prayer or rest?
- Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?
- 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?

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER"

- Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
- Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?
- Have I talked back to my parents, teachers, or other adults?
- Am I willing to help around the house or must I be nagged a hundred times? Do I do my chores without complaining? Without being reminded? Was I lazy around the house?
- Do I try to get along with my brothers and sisters?
- Am I a tattletale or bully?
- Do I give a good example, especially to younger siblings?
- Do I always say “Thank You” and “Please” to people?
- Do I respect others in authority: priests, nuns, police, the elderly, baby-sitters, teachers, coaches?

- Am I hard to get along with (during school, at Grandma’s, at home)?
- Do I always try to get my own way, only concerned with myself?
- Am I thankful to God and my parents for what I have been given?
- Have I started fights with my brothers or sisters at home?
- Have I blamed other people for things that I do?
- Do I purposely do things that I know my parents would not approve of?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"YOU SHALL NOT KILL"

- Do I keep my patience or do I lose my temper?
- Do I hold grudges and try to get even with others?
- Did I call anyone names or talk about them behind their back?
- Am I mean to others who are different from myself?
- Was I too lazy to take care of myself (brush my teeth, eat well)?
- Did I eat or drink too much?
- Did I avoid medicine?
- Did I refuse to eat food I didn’t like?
- Was I mean to animals or destructive to the environment?
- Do I show my love for others by obeying rules at school at in public places?
- Have I been unfair to others, especially others who are different than me?
- Have I pouted or have been moody?
- Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates? Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?
- Do I speak badly or gossip about others?
- Do I defend people who others talk badly about?
- Am I welcoming of others?
- Did I refuse to play with someone for no good reason?
- Do I let my anger get the best of me?
- Do I enjoy seeing bad things happen to people?
- Do I beat up others or hurt their bodies?
- Have I hurt my own body in any way?
- Do I say cruel things, or make fun of others to hurt their feelings?
- Have I stopped speaking to anyone?
- Do I encourage others to do bad things?
- Do I try to love all people, born and unborn?
- Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?
- Have I been helpful and affectionate towards my family?
- Have I been kind and generous with my friends?

SIXTH & NINTH COMMANDMENTS

"YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"

"YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR’S WIFE"

- Do I show respect for my body?
- Do I respect the bodies of others? Have I entertained impure thoughts?
- Have I been jealous of the friends or things someone else has?
- Have I tried to be kind to others?

- Do I watch television shows, movies, or pictures that are bad?
- Am I modest in my speech and clothes that I wear?
- Do I allow my parents to spend time with one another, or do I get jealous and want them to pay attention only to me?

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

"YOU SHALL NOT STEAL"

"YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS"

- Have I taken something that belongs to someone else?
- Have I "forgotten" to return something I borrowed?
- Have I used money responsibly?
- Have I destroyed or misused another person's property for fun?
- Have I been greedy or jealous of things others have?
- Have I nagged my parents into buying things because my friends have them?
- Do I refuse to share my things with others?
- Do I treat the property of others with respect and care?
- Did I break something on purpose?
- Did I borrow something without permission?
- Do I get mad when I have to share a sibling or friend with others? Am I jealous or envious of the things or abilities that others have?
- Do I share the things I have with my family, friends and poor people? Do I share my things with my brothers and sisters?
- Do I do my homework and schoolwork the best I can?
- Do I ever cheat or disrupt the class?
- Have I helped others when they have needed help?
- Do I destroy my own belongings or those of others?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR"

- Do I play fairly, or do I ever cheat at school or games?
- Have I been honest, or have I lied to my parents or to others?
- Have I hurt someone by what I have said or done?
- Am I honest in my schoolwork? Have I copied someone else's homework?
- Do I make promises that I do not keep?
- Do I tell lies to make myself look good?
- Do I tell lies to protect myself from punishment?
- Do I tell lies to make another person look bad or get them in trouble?
- Did I break a secret or a confidence?

OTHER SINS

- Did I intentionally refuse to mention some grave sin in my previous confessions?
- 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?)

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.

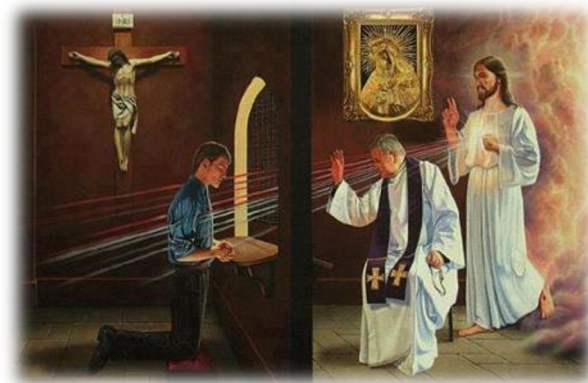
SAINT PHILIP CHURCH

ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

A GUIDE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

HELP IN MAKING A THOROUGH
EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE
&
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 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."

JESUS TO SAINT FAUSTINA