

Confession Guide for Adults

A Guide for Confession

The basic requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the “prodigal son” and to acknowledge our sins with the true sorrow before the priest.

Sin in My Life

Modern society has lost a sense of sin. As a Catholic follower of Christ, I must make an effort to recognize sin in my daily actions, words and omissions.

The Gospels show how important is the forgiveness of our sins. Lives of saints prove that the person who grows in holiness has a stronger sense of sin, sorrow for sins, and a need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession.

The Differences in Sins

As a result of Original Sin, human nature is weakened. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, takes away Original Sin, and turns us back toward God. The consequences of this weakness and the inclination to evil persist, and we often commit personal or actual sin. Actual sin is sin which people commit. There are two kinds of actual sin, mortal and venial. Mortal sin is a deadly offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul. Three simultaneous conditions must be fulfilled for a mortal sin: 1) the act must be something very serious; 2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done; 3) the person must have sufficient freedom of the will.

Remember

If you need help—especially if you have been away for some time—simply ask the priest and he will help you by “walking” you through the steps to make a good confession.

Before Confession

Be truly sorry for your sins. The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God and which is reborn with repentance. The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. This does not mean that a promise never to fall again into sin is necessary. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

Examination of Conscience

Before going to Confession, you should make a review of mortal and venial sins since your last sacramental confession, and should express sorrow for sins, hatred for sins and a firm resolution not to sin again.

A helpful pattern for examination of conscience is to review the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church.

During Confession

After examining your conscience and telling God of your sorrow, go into the confessional. You may kneel at the screen or sit to talk face-to-face with the priest.

Begin your confession with the sign of the cross, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. My last confession was ____ weeks (months, years) ago."

The priest may read a passage from the Holy Scripture.

Say the sins that you remember. Start with the one(s) that is most difficult to say. (In order to make a good confession the faithful must confess all mortal sins, according to kind and number.) After confessing all the sins you remember since your last good confession you may conclude by saying, "I am sorry for these and all the sins in my past life." Listen to the words of the priest. He will assign you some penance. Doing the penance will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. When invited, express some prayer of sorrow or Act of Contrition.

At the End of Confession

Listen to the words of absolution, the sacramental forgiveness of the Church through the ordained priest.

As you listen to the words of forgiveness you may make the sign of the cross with the priest. If he closes by saying, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good," answer, "For His mercy endures forever."

After Confession

Give thanks to God for forgiving you again. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next Confession.

Do Your Assigned Penance

Resolve to return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation often. We Catholics are fortunate to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is the ordinary way for us to have our sins forgiven. This sacrament is a powerful help to get rid of our weaknesses, grow in holiness, and lead a balanced and virtuous life.

Examination of Conscience for Adults

Recall your sins by prayerfully reviewing what you have done, with full knowledge and full consent, against God's Commandments and the teachings of the Church.

- Have I prayed to God every day, and thanked Him for His many gifts? Have I taken the name of God in vain?
- Have I gone to confession at least once a year? Have I received communion in a state of mortal sin?
- Have I indulged in boasting or vainglory?
- Have I put my faith in danger in any way or engaged in superstitious practices?
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Am I attentive at Mass? Have I fasted and abstained on the prescribed days?
- Have I disobeyed my parents or lawful superiors in important matters?
- Have I hated others, or desired revenge? Have I been disrespectful or refused forgiveness? Have I been envious?
- Have I been drunk or taken illicit drugs?
- Have I consented to, recommended, or actively taken part in an abortion?
- Have I willfully looked at pornography, entertained impure thoughts, or engaged in unchaste conversations or actions?
- Have I used artificial contraception?
- Have I been unfaithful to my spouse or engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Have I stolen or damaged another's property? Have I been honest in my business relations and with my employer?
- Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor? Do I contribute to the Church?
- Have I told lies or gossiped? Have I judged others rashly in serious matters?