

The Sacrament of Confession

On the evening of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His apostles and gave them the power to forgive all human sins. *Breathing upon them, He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."* [John 20:22-23] It is Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who wants us to meet Him in this beautiful Sacrament so that He can forgive us all our sins through His priest.

How to go to Confession

- Spend a few moments quietly in church examining your conscience, and asking God to make you aware of your sins since the last time you went to confession.
- You always have the option to kneel behind the screen, or sit in the chair face to face with the priest.
- The priest will greet you and make the sign of the cross. You should say: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been (*state how long*) since my last confession. These are my sins..."
- Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest.
- Do not omit any sins, especially serious ones, because you are embarrassed. Never be embarrassed or nervous with a priest, whose *privilege* it is to hear your sins and forgive them in the name of Christ. Remember, a priest may NEVER reveal the sins he hears in confession.
- Listen to the advice the priest gives you.
- The priest will give you your "penance," (a few prayers to say after confession). Remember, it is Our Lord on the Cross who makes up for your sins, not your penance.
- Then say an Act of Contrition in front of the priest.
- The priest will then say the Prayer of Absolution over you. This is the moment when Christ blots out all your sins through the priest.
- Go outside the confessional and say your penance right away, preferably in front of Our Lord in the tabernacle.
- Go to confession once a month, or as often as you feel you need to; never go less than once a year.
- Bring someone who has been away for a long time back to the Sacrament of Confession.

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, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

An Examination of Conscience

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

- Does God hold first place in my life?
- Do I seek to love God with my whole heart and soul?
- Do I give God time every day in prayer?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices, like fortune-telling, or practiced witchcraft or the occult?
- Do I seek to obey God's Word as taught by the Church?
- Have I told a lie in confession, or have I deliberately withheld confessing a mortal sin?
- Have I received communion in a state of mortal sin?

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

- Have I insulted God's Holy Name or used it lightly or carelessly? Have I used obscene language?
- Have I been angry with God?
- Have I wished evil upon another person?
- Have I insulted or abused a sacred person or object?

III. REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

- Have I missed Mass deliberately on Sundays, or on Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest? Have I done needless work on Sunday?

IV. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

- Do I honor and obey my parents?
- Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and family?
- Have I given my family a good religious example?
- Do I try to bring peace into my family life?
- Do I care for my aged and infirm parents or relatives?
- Have I made certain my elderly parents can get to church, be visited by a priest, receive the sacraments, and have a funeral mass?

V. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

- Have I murdered or physically harmed anyone?
- Have I had an abortion? Have I encouraged, aided or paid for anyone to have an abortion?
- Have I abused drugs or alcohol? Have I sold drugs?
- Have I mutilated myself through any form of sterilization? Have I encouraged others to do the same?
- Have I given scandal to anyone or led anyone into sin?
- Have I harbored hatred in my heart, or been angry or resentful?

VI. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

- Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and in action?
- Have I practiced any form of artificial contraception?
- Have I engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage with a member of the opposite sex, or the same sex?
- Have I masturbated?
- Have I indulged in pornographic material?
- Have I used or thought of other people as objects?
- Have I engaged in prostitution?
- Am I pure in my thoughts, words and actions?
- Do I dress provocatively?

VII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

- Have I stolen what is not mine?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what was stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, or at home?
- Am I honest and fair with my employer/employee?
- Do I gamble excessively, denying my family their needs?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Do I share what I have with the poor?

VIII. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

- Have I lied, gossiped, or spoken behind anyone's back?
- Have I been truthful in my dealings with others?
- Have I been critical, negative or uncharitable in my thoughts and words of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?

IX. YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused such thoughts by impure reading, movies, television, the internet, conversation, or curiosity?
- Do I seek to control my imagination?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts?

X. YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

- Am I jealous of what other people have?
- Do I envy the families or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life?
- Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?