

Confession has not forgiven a sin, the fear that a person is not sufficiently sorry for a sin, or the mistaking of a venial sin for a mortal sin.

Examination of Conscience

Recall your sins. Calmly ask yourself how you may have violated God's Commandments.

- When was my last good Confession? Did I receive Communion or other sacraments in the state of mortal sin? Did I intentionally fail to confess some mortal sin in my previous Confession? Do I try to go to sacramental confession with a certain regularity? Do I pray every day? Do I envy other people, their possessions, their accomplishments, their manner of dress, their wealth, or their apparent "good life"? Do I spend in excess or needlessly?
- Did I willfully and seriously doubt my faith or objective moral truths? Did I put myself in danger of losing my faith through readings hostile to Catholic teachings or involvement in non-Catholic sects? Did I engage in superstitious practices: palm-reading, fortune telling, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, or consult a medium who claims the ability to contact the dead?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse, or take a false oath? Do I swear needlessly?
- Did I miss Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault, without any serious reason? Did I keep fast and abstinence on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents and lawful superiors in important matters? Am I lazy or careless in fulfilling my duties and responsibilities at school, work, or at home? Do I make good use of my time? Do I allow myself to be distracted at school or work with my smart phone or other electronic device(s)? Do I take items from school or work (steal)? Am I careless with equipment or items entrusted to me?

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- Did I hate, bear resentment toward, or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Was I selfish in how I treated others, especially my spouse, my children, my brothers and sisters, my relatives, or my friends? Did I cause physical injury or even death? Did I eat or drink to excess? Did I take illicit drugs or misuse prescription or over-the-counter drugs? Did I endorse, vote for, or exercise my political rights in view of furthering the cause of abortion?
- Did I willfully look at pornographic images or watch immoral movies? Did I read immoral books or magazines? Did I engage in impure jokes or conversations? Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or feelings? Did I commit impure acts, alone or with others? Did I have sexual relations outside of marriage with the opposite sex or the same sex? Did I take contraceptive or abortifacient pills or use other artificial means in order to prevent conception?
- Did I steal or damage another's property? How much? Have I made reparation for the damages done? Have I been dishonest in my business relations? Did I waste time at work or otherwise misrepresent the actual time for which I am owed money?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by calumny, or detraction telling the unknown grave faults of others without necessity, even if they are true? Did I judge others rashly? Have I tried to make restitution for the bad reputation I caused?

If you remember other serious sins, mention them in your next Confession.

Before Confession

Be truly sorry for your sins. We should feel motivated to go to Confession by feeling sorrow for having offended God who loves us, and whom we should love. However, it is acceptable to go to Confession out of fear of punishment, as long as you humbly repent of your sins and resolve not to commit them again.

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*"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."**

Understood in this way, contrition is therefore the beginning and the heart of conversion, of that evangelical metánoia which brings the person back to God like the Prodigal Son.

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.

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.

You may now go to Confession.

During Confession

- You can begin your confession by making the sign of the cross and greeting the priest: **"Bless me father, for I have sinned."**
- The priest gives you a blessing and you may respond by reciting the words St. Peter said to Christ: **"Lord you know all things; you know that I love you."** You may continue with the time since your last confession: **"My last good confession was . . ."** (how many weeks, months or years approximately)."

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- *Say the sins that you remember.* Start with the one that is most difficult to say, after this it will be easier to mention the rest. If you received general absolution, tell this and the sins forgiven then to the priest.
- If you do not know how to confess, feel uneasy or ashamed, simply ask the priest to assist you. Be assured he will help you make a good confession. Simply answer the questions without hiding anything out of shame or fear. You are confessing to God himself, who is represented by the priest. Place your trust in God: he is your merciful Father and wants to forgive you. Have a firm resolution to avoid that sin (those sins) in the future, with the grace of God.
- If you do not remember any serious sins, be sure to confess at least some of your venial sins, adding at the end: **“I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life, especially for . . . (mention in general any past sin, especially those that are habitual and for which you are particularly sorry, for example, all my sins against charity, purity, etc.).”**
- The priest will give you spiritual advice and assign you some form of penance.
- Listen to the words of the absolution attentively. At the end answer: **“Amen.”** Be willing to do the penance as soon as possible. This *penance* will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

After Confession

Give thanks to God for forgiving you again. If you recall some serious sin that you forgot to tell, know that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next Confession. Guard against the temptation to sin, and later expecting God’s forgiveness; presuming upon God’s mercy is tempting God.

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The Order for Reconciling Individual Penitents

Then the penitent and, if appropriate, the Priest as well, sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross, saying:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Priest invites the penitent to have trust in God, in these or similar words:

May God, who has shone his light in our hearts/grant that you may truly know your sins/and his mercy.

The penitent replies: **Amen.**

Then, if appropriate, the Priest reads a text of Sacred Scripture in which God’s mercy is announced and people are called to conversion. Then the penitent says, where it is the custom:

Lord, you know all things;/you know that I love you.

The penitent states how long it has been since his (her) last confession, and then confesses his (her) sins.

Then, the penitent says a general formula for confession, e.g.:

Lord Jesus, Son of God,/have mercy on me, a sinner.

Then the Priest, extending his hands over the penitent’s head (or at least extending his right hand), says:

God, the Father of mercies,/through the Death and Resurrection of his Son/has reconciled the world to himself/and poured out the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins;/through the ministry of the Church/may God grant 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 replies: **Amen.**

Then the Priest dismisses the penitent who has been reconciled, saying:

May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,/the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints,/whatever good you do and whatever evil you endure,/be for you a remedy for sin,/an increase of grace,/and the reward of eternal life./Go in peace.

The penitent should fulfill the penance imposed.

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————— With ecclesiastical approval —————

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SHORT GUIDE FOR CONFESSION

By James Socias

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 true sorrow before his representative, the priest.

*“To 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!”**

Perfect and Imperfect Contrition

When we are sorry for our sins out of love for God, we have *perfect contrition*. Such contrition involves an abhorrence of all sin. When we have a relationship with God, who loves us beyond human understanding, we will naturally want to please him and to avoid that which would harm our relationship with him. Upon realizing that we have done something that offends him, we will immediately seek reconciliation out of love for him.

As human beings with a weakened will, our contrition is not always perfect, and therefore, we might have *imperfect contrition*. This type of sorrow is primarily out of a fear of punishment. While it is inferior to perfect contrition, it is still valid in that we acknowledge that we have done wrong, recognize God’s divine justice and his right to punish, and most importantly, choose to do what is right from now on.

There are also instances when a person may suffer from a *scrupulous conscience*. Scrupulosity is the act of judging things to be morally evil when they are not. Some examples include the fear that

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