

## HOW TO MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION



Confession is the method given by Christ to the Church by which individual men and women may be freed from sins. The absolution is granted through a priest those individuals who with true remorse confess their sins and promise to try not to ever repeat that sin.

There are five steps to a good confession:

1. Examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Confess your sins to a priest.
4. Resolve to amend your life.
5. After your confession, do the penance the priest assigns.

### **Before Confession**

The easiest way to examine your conscience is to go down the Ten Commandments and reflect if you have committed an act against the Commandments.



Below are the Ten Commandments and questions to reflect upon:

**1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**

Do I give God time every day in prayer? Do I seek to love Him with my whole heart? Have I denied the existence of God? Have I refused to accept what God has revealed as true, or what the Catholic Church proposes for belief? Have I left the Catholic Faith? Have I been involved with superstitious practices (horoscopes, ouija boards, etc.) or have I been involved with the occult? Have I let someone or something influence my choices more than God? Have I ever received Communion in the state of mortal sin? Do I despair of or presume on God's mercy?

**2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

Have I used God's name in a careless or insulting manner? Have I been angry with God? Have I wished evil upon any other person? Have I failed to keep vows or promises that I have made to God? Have I been disrespectful of sacred things in word or action? Have I used vulgar, suggestive or obscene speech?

**3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.**

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I not kept Sunday as a family day and a day of rest? Do I do needless work on Sunday? Do I make others work on Sunday? Have I failed to fast or abstain when required by Church law? Have I ever deliberately told a lie or hid a serious sin from the priest in Confession?

**4. Honor your father and your mother.**

Do I honor and obey my parents? Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and children? Have I given my family good religious example? Do I try to bring peace into my home life? Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives? Do I respect my elders? Do I respect those with legitimate authority over me (employer, teacher, priest, politician, etc.)?

**5. You shall not kill.**

Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion? Have I physically harmed anyone? Have I seriously considered or attempted suicide? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I neglected to take proper care of my health? Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin? Have I been resentful or refused to control my temper? Have I harbored hatred in my heart? Have I purposely provoked another by teasing or nagging? Have I sought revenge or hoped something bad would happen to someone? Have I treated animals cruelly?

**6. You shall not commit adultery.**

Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action? Have I engaged in any sexual activity before marriage or outside of marriage? Have I used artificial means of birth control? Have I been sterilized (or encouraged another to be) for reasons of birth control? Have I used in vitro fertilization? Have I deliberately caused male climax outside of normal sexual intercourse? Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects? Have I deprived my spouse of his or her marital right without just cause? Have I claimed my own marital right without concern for my spouse? Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity? Do I seek to be pure in my thoughts, words and actions? Have I been guilty of masturbation?

### **7. You shall not steal.**

Have I taken what is not mine without the consent of the owner? Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen? Have I defaced, destroyed or lost another's property through my own fault? Do I waste time at work, school or at home? Have I made false claims to an insurance company? Have I cheated on a test, taxes, sports, games, or in business? Do I gamble excessively, thereby denying my family of their needs? Do I pay my debts promptly? Do I seek to share what I have with those in need?

### **8. You shall not bear false witness.**

Have I lied? Have I gossiped? Have I unnecessarily harmed someone's reputation? Have I spoken behind someone else's back? Have I failed to make reparation for a lie I told, or for harm done to a person's reputation? Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others? Have I been guilty of rash judgment? Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential? Have I failed to speak out in defense of the Catholic Faith, the Church, or of another person?

### **9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.**

Have I consented to impure thoughts? Have I caused them by impure television, movies, books, magazines or internet? Do I seek to control my imagination? Do I pray to banish impure thoughts and temptations? Do I listen to, or engage in, impure conversations or jokes? Am I careful to dress modestly, so as not to tempt others?

### **10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.**

Am I jealous of what other people have? Do I envy other people's families, success, talents, looks, or possessions? Am I greedy or selfish? Do I have an inordinate desire for material things?

### **During Confession**

Make the sign of the cross and say: *"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been \_\_\_\_ Months/weeks/years since my last confession"*

[Some priests begin with a blessing, exhortation, or Scripture reading. This is not always done. If he does begin in this manner listen prayerfully and with an open heart.]

Then say, "*I have committed the following sins,*" and begin your confession.

Confess your sins clearly and sincerely. Should you feel nervous, or uncertain about some sins, ask the priest to help you. Do not let fear or embarrassment lead you to hide a sin that needs confessing. This can prevent the sacramental graces from being received.

When you have finished confessing all the sins that you remember, say: "*For these sins and all the sins of my past life, I ask absolution and penance from you, Father.*"

The priest may give you some advice. He will give you a penance to be performed after the sacrament of confession. The penance is part of the sacrament and so needs to be completed. At his invitation audibly recite an Act of Contrition.

You can say the Act of Contrition either in your own words, or by reciting the following or a similar one:

*O my God, I am heartily sorry  
for having offended you.  
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 sin no more, to do penance,  
and to amend my life. Amen.*

After having recited the Act of Contrition receive the priest's absolution.

### **After Confession**

If the penance given by the confessor consists in some prayers to be recited, say them devoutly as soon as possible. That completes the sacrament.

If in a church you may wish to kneel down in front of the altar or of an image of Our Lord and thank Him for the gift of this confession. Renew your resolution and ask His help to overcome future temptations. Have confidence that, having made a good confession, the good Lord, in His infinite mercy, has forgiven you.



From “How Do I make a Good Confession?” at [whycatholicsdothat.com](http://whycatholicsdothat.com) (with modifications).