

## A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

### How to go to Confession

1. You should prepare yourself before you go to confession by prayerfully examining your conscience. If you it will help, you can bring some notes so that you do not forget what you want to confess. You should organize your Confession so that you lead with the sins that *weigh heaviest on you*, and the sins that are *objectively the most serious*, before mentioning other sins.
2. After the priest greets you in the name of Christ, make the sign of the cross. He may choose to recite a reading from Scripture, after which you say: "Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. These are my sins." If you're nervous or it's been a while and you forget what to do, just say so, and the priest will help you.
3. A good confession is clear, concise, and complete. Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest. Speak in the first person, active voice (E.g., "I missed Mass on Sunday" not "mistakes were made"). If the priest needs to know more, he will ask you to clarify or elaborate. You might even want to discuss the circumstances and the root causes of your sins and ask the priest for advice or direction.
4. Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then make an Act of Contrition for your sins.
5. The priest will then absolve you from your sins, ending with "Go in peace." And you respond by saying: "Thanks be to God."
6. Spend some time with Our Lord thanking and praising Him for the gift of His mercy. Try to perform your penance as soon as possible.

### EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE (organized around the Ten Commandments)

#### **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 been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved with the occult?
- Do I seek to surrender myself to God's word as taught by the Church?
- Have I ever received communion in the state of mortal sin?
- Have I ever deliberately told a lie in Confession or have I withheld a mortal sin from the priest in Confession?
- Are there other "gods" in my life? Money, Security, Power, People, etc.?

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

- Have I used God's name in vain: lightly or carelessly?
- Have I been angry with God?
- Have I wished evil upon any other person?

-Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?

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

-Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?

-Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?

-Do I do needless work on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation?

### **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 those in authority over me?

-Have I broken any laws or rules that I am obligated to follow?

### **5. You shall not kill.**

-Have I physically harmed anyone?

-Have I been angry or resentful?

-Have I harbored hatred in my heart?

-Have I abused alcohol or drugs?

-Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading him or her into sin?

-Have I had an abortion or encouraged or helped anyone to have an abortion?

-Have I mutilated myself through any form of sterilization?

-Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization?

-Have I engaged, in any way, in sins against human life such as artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization?

-Have I participated in or approved of euthanasia?

### **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 outside of marriage?

-Do I seek to control my thoughts and imagination?

-Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as mere objects?

- Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control in my marriage?
- Has each sexual act in my marriage been open to the transmission of new life?
- Have I been guilty of masturbation?
- Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words, actions?
- Am I careful to dress modestly?

**7. You shall not steal.**

- Have I stolen what is not mine?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, and home?
- 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 the poor?
- Have I cheated anyone out of what is justly theirs, for example creditors, insurance companies, big corporations?

**8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

- Have I lied?
- Have I withheld the truth from someone who has a right to know it?
- Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
- Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?
- Have I gossiped?
- Have I injured the reputation of others by slander, or by telling the truth when it is damaging to them?
- Do I speak badly of others behind their back?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?

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

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, television, conversation or curiosity?
- Do I treat others as objects for my pleasure, rather than as sons and daughters of God?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?
- Have I behaved in an inappropriate way with members of the opposite sex?

**10. 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?

**PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION**

O most merciful God! Prostrate at your feet, I implore your forgiveness. I sincerely desire to leave all my evil ways and to confess my sins with all sincerity to you and to your priest. I am a sinner, have mercy on me, O Lord. Give me a lively faith and a firm hope in the Passion of my Redeemer. Give me, for your mercy's sake a sorrow for having offended so good a God. Mary, my mother, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may make a good confession. Amen.

**AN ACT OF CONTRITION**

Oh my God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.