

Confession Guide

for Middle School-Age Youth



“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).

Why go to confession?

Jesus gave us the sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) when he breathed on the Apostles saying, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (Jn 20:22-23). With these words, Jesus entrusted his chosen disciples with a share in his own ministry of forgiving sins. This power to forgive sins has been passed on to the priests of our own time through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

How do I make a good confession?

Contrition is necessary for a good confession. Contrition means being sorry for our sins. Being truly sorry, though, is not about feelings; it is instead a *choice* we make. Contrition means making the choice to turn away from the sins of our past while also intending to avoid them in the future. To know our sins, it’s important to **examine our conscience** before confession (see page 2). During confession, we should state our sins humbly and honestly while avoiding any unnecessary details.

What do I need to confess?

There are two types of sins: mortal sins and venial sins. *Mortal sins* are sins serious enough to break our relationship with God. *Venial sins* are less serious sins that hurt our relationship with God, but without breaking it. **Mortal sins are always required to be confessed.** Even though venial sins are not strictly required to be confessed, doing so helps us to grow closer to God.

When is a sin mortal?

For a sin to be mortal it must meet three conditions. First, it must be something **serious**. Second, the one doing it must **fully know** it is something serious. And third, it must be freely chosen with **deliberate consent**. As children become teenagers, temptations to mortal sin begin to become more common. One example of something serious enough that it could be a mortal sin is doing drugs.

Will the priest tell my sins to anyone?

The priest is **never** allowed to tell your sins, even if he has to go to jail for it.

Should I be nervous?

It’s okay if you are nervous, but there is no need to be. Confession is about receiving God’s mercy and being freed from the sins weighing us down.

Examination of Conscience

Ask yourself these questions to prepare for confession.

- I. **I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.** *Have I...*
 - Intentionally held back a mortal sin or lied in confession?
 - Put other things ahead of God in my life? (Friends, popularity, sports, school, video games, money, etc.)
 - Stopped believing in God or denied my Catholic faith?
 - Not prayed every day? Only prayed when I needed something?
 - Taken God's forgiveness for granted? Believed my sins are too great for God's mercy?
 - Practiced or put faith in things incompatible with Christianity? (Horoscopes, Ouija boards, good luck charms, etc.)
 - Hung around friends who lead me away from God?
 - Watched movies/TV shows or listened to music harmful to my relationship with God?
- II. **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.** *Have I...*
 - Used the name of God or Jesus disrespectfully?
 - Made jokes that disrespect God, the Church, or the Catholic faith?
- III. **Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day.** *Have I...*
 - Missed Mass on Sunday or holy days of obligation? If so, have I asked my family to take me?
 - Showed proper reverence during Mass? Chewed gum or eaten food during Mass? Dressed appropriately for Mass?
 - Kept the one-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion?
 - Let unnecessary work get in the way of Sunday being a day for faith, rest, and family?
- IV. **Honor your father and your mother.** *Have I...*
 - Obeyed my parents/guardians? Done something they wouldn't approve of?
 - Not showed my parents respect? Yelled, spoken rudely, or talked back to them?
 - Obeyed my teachers and those in rightful authority?
- V. **You shall not kill.** *Have I...*
 - Hurt, bullied, or been cruel to another?
 - Lost my temper?

- Dwelled on thoughts of hatred? Sought revenge?
- Refused forgiveness to anyone? Held grudges?
- Not treated all people with respect, even those different from me?
- Used drugs or alcohol? Smoked or vaped?
- Hurt myself on purpose?
- Encouraged another to do something sinful?

VI. **You shall not commit adultery.** *Have I...*

- Not treated my body or another's body with purity and respect?
- Looked at inappropriate pictures or videos on purpose?

VII. **You shall not steal.** *Have I...*

- Stolen, damaged, or vandalized another's property?
- Wasted too much money on electronics or clothing?
- Wasted too much time on video games, TV, or the internet?

VIII. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
Have I...

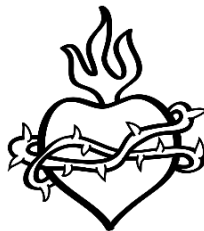
- Lied? Cheated?
- Judged another?
- Spread a false rumor?
- Gossiped about another's negative qualities?
- Shared secrets that I shouldn't have?
- Insulted another? Bragged?
- Failed to stand up for someone when I should have?

IX. **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.** *Have I...*

- Worn clothes that are immodest, revealing, or too tight?
- Been too concerned about my appearance?

X. **You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.** *Have I...*

- Been envious (jealous) of another's gifts, looks, or possessions?
- Cared too much about my popularity?
- Cared too little about those usually left out?



How to go to Confession

After you enter the confessional, begin 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 may say aloud a prayer or a selection of scripture.

You say,

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ (number of weeks/months/years) since my last confession. These are my sins...”

Confess your sins. Include the number of times you committed each sin or at least its general frequency (e.g., about 3 times per week). For mortal sins, number or frequency is always required.

When finished say,

“For these and all the sins of my past life, I am sorry.”

The priest gives you a penance and invites you to say an Act of Contrition:

An Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, 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 Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

The priest says the prayer of absolution. Listen especially for the words, “I absolve you from your sins.”

(If the priest says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,” you respond, “His mercy endures forever.”)

The priest concludes, “...Go in peace.” You respond,

“Thanks be to God.”

Nihil Obstat:

Rev. George Welzbacher, Censor liborum

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+ Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, September 2020

This guide with an alternative act of contrition is available at freethewordarchives.org

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