

How to make a good Confession:

Preparing for the sacrament of reconciliation is often misunderstood. Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation. We should always begin with prayer, placing ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. We seek healing and forgiveness through repentance and resolve to sin no more. People frequently view it as a list of mistakes they have made instead of an opportunity to talk about what is troubling their hearts, about who they are and the changes they would like to make in their lives.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers us that chance to speak and pray with someone who can help us with this task.

An Examination of Conscience is the act of looking prayerfully into our hearts to ask how we have hurt our relationships with God and other people through our thoughts, words, and actions. We reflect on the Ten Commandments and the teachings of the Church.

Over the page are questions to help you examine your conscience. Be honest. Ask yourself, "What do I do well?" "What do I want to change about myself?" and "How do I want God to transform me?"

Then tell God you are truly sorry for your sins and make a firm resolution not to sin again.

There is an Examination of Conscience to help you prepare over the page.

Procedure in the Confessional:

Before celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, be sure to prepare with an Examination of Conscience (see overleaf).

The priest greets us, and we pray the Sign of the Cross. He invites us to trust in God. He may read God's Word with us.

Begin your confession by making the sign of the cross and greeting the priest: "*Bless me father, for I have sinned.*"

You then continue: "*My last confession was...*" (how many weeks, months, or years?)

Confess all of your sins to the priest.

The priest will help you make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive you.

Following your confession of sins, say: "*I am sorry for these and all of my sins.*"

The priest will assign you a penance and offer advice to help you be a better Catholic person. Your penance is may be an act of kindness, or some prayers to pray, or both.

You will then say an **Act of Contrition**, expressing your sorrow for your sins. [See below for some samples].

The priest, acting in the person of Christ, will then absolve you from your sins. The priest says, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." We respond, "**Amen.**"

The priest may then say, "God has forgiven your sins. Go in peace." You respond, "**Thanks be to God.**" You then leave and as soon as possible complete the penance the priest has assigned to you.

Act of Contrition

(There are many different versions of this prayer. Choose the one that speaks to your heart.)

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 the help of Your grace, to sin no more and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us. In His name, my God, have mercy.

OR

O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace, I will not sin again.

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Examination of conscience

My relationship with God

How do I pray?

- I rush through my prayers
- I am easily distracted
- I don't give it enough priority
- I don't pray

How do I attend Mass?

- I attend only out of habit
- I attend out of fear
- I am open to the experience, when it fits my schedule
- I don't attend Sunday Mass every week

How do I use God's name?

- To swear
- To express anger

How do I treat all of God's creation?

- I am wasteful with the earth's resources
- My relationship with God is separate from everything else and has no impact on how I see or treat the world around me

My relationship with other people

How do I treat my family?

- I tease and push around my siblings
- With a lack of respect for my parents
- I fight with or ignore members of my family and make no effort to try to make peace with them
- I don't help them when they are in need

How do I treat other people's sexuality?

- I use crude language and jokes
- I use people for my own physical pleasure (This may include pornography/self-abuse)
- I see sex as something to be shared by any two people who think they love each other, even outside of marriage

How do I treat my colleagues / lecturers / teachers?

- I am rude
- I don't do my work
- I am disruptive to others
- I am bored and don't pay attention

How do I treat people that I don't know?

- I cheat or lie to get what I need
- I don't care because I'll never see them again
- I disrespect them and make negative comments

How do I treat my friends?

- I use them for personal gain
- I make fun of them or gossip about them behind their backs
- I cause scandal or lead others to sin through my words or actions

My relationship with myself

How do I see myself?

- I focus only on what I don't like about myself
- I think I am better than others

How do I treat myself?

- I misuse drugs, tobacco or alcohol
- I disrespect my sexuality
- I cause physical damage to my body
- I don't look after my body by eating healthily and exercising.

How seriously do I take my work ethic?

- I procrastinate about my work or study
- I complete tasks half-heartedly
- I work slowly and take advantage of other's time

What informs my choices?

- It's the easiest way out of the situation
- I want to be accepted
- I avoid making the hard choices

Summary reflection

Now that you have reflected on your relationship with God, other people, and yourself - ask yourself:

- For what do I seek forgiveness?
- How do I want God to transform me?
- What will I confess and ask God's forgiveness and grace to change?

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