

A Short Guide for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

"You are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect"

-Matthew 5:48

"Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense."

-Psalm 51:1

"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 is waiting for you. He will heal you, and you will be at peace with God!"

-Homily of Pope John Paul II,
September 13, 1987

"Your sins are like a grain of sand compared to the Mountain of God's Mercy"

-Saint John Vianney

Five Steps to a Good Confession

1. Carefully examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Make a firm resolution not to sin again and to avoid all occasions of sin.
4. Confess all of your sins in the confessional and receive absolution.
5. After your confession do the penance the priest assigns to you.

An Examination of Conscience:

Based on the 10 Commandments-
Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21

I. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before Me.

Have I doubted or denied my Faith? Have I ever been away from the Church for an extended period of time? Do I pray daily, and seek to place God as the highest priority in my life? Do I seek to

surrender myself to God's Word, as taught by the guidance of the Church? Have I been involved with superstitious practices, falsely attributing power to anyone or anything else than God? E.g. horoscopes, crystals, Ouija boards, fortune telling, etc. Have I received Holy Communion knowingly while in the state of mortal sin without making an effort to go to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation? Have I ever purposely withheld a sin from a priest when confessing?

II. You shall not take the Name of the Lord God in vain.

Have I blasphemed God or taken God's Name in vain, lightly or carelessly? Have I sworn or used foul or perverse language? Have I told jokes, which make fun of Jesus, Mary or the saints? Have I watched movies or television shows that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently? Have I ever wished evil upon someone? Have I ever prayed for evil upon someone?

III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or other Holy Days of Obligation? Do I try to pay attention and participate fully at Mass, or am I passive and uninvolved? Do I habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason? Have I tried to keep Sunday as a day of rest for family, or am I more concerned with working or being with friends? Do I do needless work or shopping on Sunday?

IV. Honor your father and mother.

Do I do my best to honor and obey my parents, and all those with authority in my life? When I wrong my parents, do I apologize and admit my failings? Have I smoked, chewed tobacco, or drank alcohol against the wishes of my parents?

V. You shall not kill.

Have I procured, performed, cooperated or advised another in the intentional killing of an unborn child through abortion? Have I seriously considered or attempted suicide? Have I physically harmed another person in any way?

Have I afflicted another person with verbal or emotional abuse?

Am I prejudice or have I unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, gender or religion? Have I drank alcohol to excess killing my ability to reason well? Have I abused other drugs? Have I driven recklessly, possibly putting others or myself at risk? Have I harbored feelings of hatred towards others, been angry or resentful? Have I encouraged others to sin by giving a bad example or causing scandal?

VI. You shall not commit adultery.

Have I committed adultery, having sexual relations with someone who is married? Have I ever committed fornication, having sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex when neither of us is married? Have I used artificial means of birth control? Have I had sexual relations with a member of the same sex? Have I engaged in impure acts with myself (masturbation)? Have I respected members of the opposite sex, or have I treated them as objects? Do I sincerely seek to be chaste (pure) in my thoughts, words and actions? Have I purposely dressed immodestly? Do I avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness, and occasions of impurity?

VII. You shall not steal.

Have I stolen anything from a store or another person, which is not rightfully mine? Have I made restitution? Did I deface, destroy or lose another's property without making restitution? Do I cheat in school, either by copying homework or stealing answers on a test? Do I waste time in school or work, thereby cheating my employer or myself? Have I "borrowed" money without having the intention of paying it back? Have I tithed my income, giving 10-15% to the Church or other charitable organizations? Have I squandered money in compulsive gambling?

IX. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Have I deliberately withheld the entire truth to protect myself? Have I exaggerated any claims to make myself look better, or to impress my friends?

Have I gossiped, purposely telling things about someone to harm their good name? Do I keep confidential, what was told me in secret, or do I break my word? Am I guilty of rash judgment, assuming the worst of another person based on circumstantial evidence? Am I guilty of detraction, destroying a person's reputation by telling others about his faults for no good reason? Am I guilty of slander or calumny, telling lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation?

IX. You shall not covet (desire) your neighbor's wife.

Have I had impure thoughts about another person and not try to control my imagination? Have I watched movies, television programs, or listened to music that have impure/sexual content, not fitting for a Christian lifestyle? Have I told impure jokes or stories that offend the sense of decency? Have I looked at pornographic videos, magazines, computer images or stories? Do I pray at once to banish such bad thoughts and temptations?

X. You shall not covet (desire) your neighbor's goods.

Am I jealous of what other people have? Am I greedy or selfish? Am I envious of others on account of their possessions or achievements? Am I materialistic, never thinking about the poor, or reaching out to help them?

A Guide to The Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

-Begin by making the **Sign of the Cross**.

-The priest will greet you and may offer a short reading from Sacred Scripture.

-You are then invited to tell the priest the last time you visited this sacrament. (**Bless me Father for I have sinned, my last confession was 1 month ago, and these are my sins...**)

-Now you are ready to confess your sins.

It is best to start with any Mortal sins.

Try to confess your sins with numbers:

(I lied 3 times since my last confession)

-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.

-When you are done confessing your sins say,

(For these and all of my sins I am truly sorry.)

-After you confess your sins the priest will give you some counsel. Then the priest will propose an act of penance.

-Remember the penance.

-Now you are invited to recite an Act of Contrition (**examples are found below**).

-The priest will give you Absolution. At the end of the prayer answer: "**Amen.**"

-Lastly the priest will give you a final dismissal.

-After you receive this Sacrament complete your penance and then spend some time giving thanks to God for forgiving you again. Our God is Love and Mercy!

Act of Contrition

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.

-or-

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, not only because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art so 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.

QUESTIONS?

I confess my sins to God...isn't that good enough?

No, when we sin, even personal sins that no one else knows, we offend not only God, but also our brothers and sisters in Christ. We believe that Christ is not just a God who dwells in heaven but that we, His people, compose the Body of Christ and He dwells among us. Our sins weaken the Body of Christ. Thus, we must also seek forgiveness from the Body of Christ. We do this by confessing to the Bishop, or one of his priests, who is the visible head of the Body of Christ in our local Church.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

I Corinthians 12:20

But as it is, there are many parts, but one Body.

Why can a priest forgive sins?

The following two excerpts of God's Word were spoken solely to Christ's Apostles...The first priests.

John 20:21-23

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."