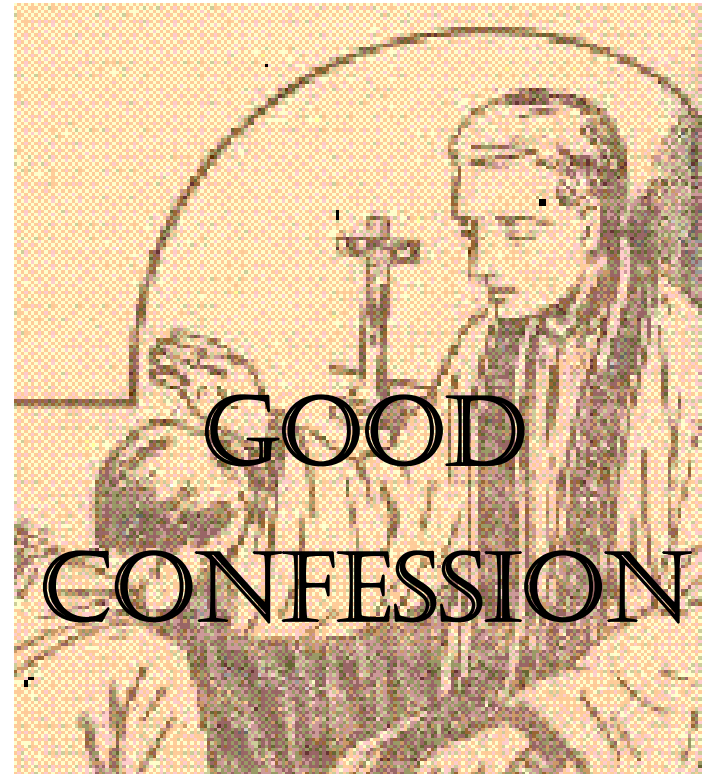


How to Make a



IV. After Confession

- Kneel down in front of the altar or before a pious image, and thank Our Lord for the gift of this confession.
- Promptly and devoutly fulfill the penance given by the priest. Although you may receive Holy Communion even before performing your penance, it is advisable to do it *as soon as possible* lest you forget it.
- Renew your resolutions to amend your life, repeating this commitment of St. Dominic Savio: ***Death rather than sin.***
- You may add the following prayer:

Thanksgiving after Confession (optional)

O my God, from the bottom of my heart, I thank Thee for having thus forgiven me. Truly, Thou art the God of all consolation, the true comfort of sinners, who, from the shades of eternal death, guide them to the possession of peace and joy. Bless, I beseech Thee, Thy servant who has now ministered to me in Thy name. Help me to remember his good counsel and advice, and to perform duly what he has rightly laid upon me. And grant him the abundance of Thy grace and favour, that his own soul may be refreshed and strengthened for Thy perfect service, and that he may come at last to the joy of the Thy heavenly kingdom. Amen.



III. Inside the Confessional

Start your confession like this:

“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.”

Allow the priest to give you his blessing. Then say:

“My last confession was _____ (*days, weeks, months, years*) ago. I have received absolution and performed (*or not?*) my penance. Since then, I accuse myself of the following sins: ...”

Then confess your sins, clearly and sincerely, starting with the most difficult ones (if you are afraid you may be tempted to hide them). Should you feel embarrassed, not knowing how to explain your faults, just ask the priest to help you..

When you are finished, add:

“For these and all the sins that have escaped my memory, and for all the sins of my past life (*you can specify one or another*), I ask pardon of God, penance and absolution of you, Father.”

The priest will give some words of advice and a penance.

Then, at his invitation, say your act of contrition:

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins, and detest them above all things, because they deserve Thy dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour Jesus Christ, and, most of all, because they offend Thine infinite goodness; and I firmly resolve, by the help of Thy grace, never to offend Thee again, and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin. Amen.

When you are saying your act of contrition, the priest gives you the absolution. Then he dismisses you, saying: “Go in peace!”

You simply say: “Thank you, Father.”

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III. INSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL

IV. AFTER CONFESSION

I. Some Considerations on Sin and Confession

Sin

- As a refusal to respond to God's love, sin is an act of ingratitude, pride, and rebellion against Him. Whenever we sin, we give ourselves or other creatures the attention and love that should be directed to God alone. In so doing, we cause damage to ourselves and others, because we upset the order established by the Creator.
- By sinning (mortally as well as venially), we turn ourselves to creatures in a disorderly manner: hence we deserve *a temporal punishment*. By sinning mortally, we moreover turn away from God: hence we deserve *eternal punishment*.
- Here are some consequences of a mortal sin:
 - ◆ We lose the state of grace (this friendship with God which makes us his children and heirs of Heaven) and run a serious risk of eternal damnation in Hell.
 - ◆ We also lose the value of all the good works that we have done and that we may do. They avail nothing for everlasting life. Neither alms, nor prayers, nor fasts, nor even martyrdom itself can profit us, if we have not repented for our sins.
 - ◆ We cannot but be filled with sadness, since mortal sin makes us lose our reason for living: eternal happiness with God.
 - ◆ We cannot receive Our Lord in Holy Communion any more (Holy Communion, indeed, is a divine food for those spiritually alive.): this state of mortal sin, in which we take pleasure, renders us repugnant to God.
 - ◆ The commission of one mortal sin makes a second easier, and leads to a third, and so on.
 - ◆ Finally, with time, mortal sins render our hearts still more hardened, more blind about the sad reality of its state; the soul is disgusted at the thought of frequenting the Sacraments, and especially confession. At last, all those repeated sins close by degrees the door of divine mercy, until scarcely any hope is

Questions relating to the 7 capital sins

1. *Pride*
 - Have I been proud, vain, puffed up with my own importance?
 - Have I boasted to win praise?
 - Have I worked for applause and to gain notice?
 - Have I despised my neighbor?
2. *Avarice*
 - Was I too attached to earthly goods?
 - Did I have inordinate desires to possess?
 - Did I systematically refuse to give any alms, as a result of my greediness?
3. *Envy*
 - Was I jealous?
 - Was I sad at others' success?
 - Did I rejoice at their failure and suffering?
4. *Gluttony*
 - Did I eat too much? Did I spend too much money or time on eating?
 - Did I eat outside meals or with great haste? Was I choosy in eating?
 - Did I get drunk?
 - Did I injure my health by abuse of tobacco?
 - Did I squander my money?
 - Did I use drugs?
5. *Sloth*
 - Was I too lazy to fulfill my religious duties?
 - Was I too lazy to do my duty of state?
 - Was I idle, wasting time in watching TV, using computer games, internet, etc.?
 - Did I sleep too much? Did I go to bed too late? Was I too lazy to wake up early in the morning?
6. *Lust* (Cf. the 6th and 9th Commandments)
7. *Anger* (Cf. the 5th Commandment)

Questions based on the 6 Precepts of the Church

1. Have I neglected, without good cause, to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy days of Obligation, and to keep those days holy by avoiding all servile work?
2. Have I failed to fast or abstain, without sufficient reason, on those days commanded by the Church?

(By fasting, we mean to take only one full meal and two smaller ones; by abstinence, we mean to abstain from meat and juice of meat.

We are bound to fast and abstain on Ash Wednesday and on Good Friday; we must abstain on Fridays of Lent.)

3. Have I omitted to confess my mortal sins at least once a year?
4. Have I made my Easter duty (to receive Holy Communion between Ash Wednesday and Trinity Sunday)?
5. Have I refused to contribute to the support of my Pastor, according to my means?
Have I gone to Mass, Sunday after Sunday, without putting anything in the collection?
6. Have I entered into marriage, or aided anyone else to do so, without bans, or before a State official or a Protestant minister? Was I a sponsor for the civil marriage of Catholics?
Have I entered into marriage, or aided anyone else to do so, without dispensation within the forbidden degree or kindred, or with any other known impediment?

Sacrament of Confession

- Penance is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ, as it appears very clearly in Holy Scripture: “*Amen I say to you, whatever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven*” (Mt 18:18), and, ““*As the Father has sent me, I also send you.*’ *When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they will be forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they will be retained’*” (Jn 20:21).
In these words, Jesus Christ gave his Apostles and their lawful successors, power and authority to absolve from all sin those who sincerely repent of their offenses.
- Confession therefore, is the sacrament in which actual sins are forgiven, by the ministry of the priest
- The eternal punishment due to mortal sin is wiped away, and also a part or all of the temporal punishment, according to the disposition of the penitent. God gives us back sanctifying grace and all the merits we had obtained before falling into mortal sin.
- The Church binds us to go to confession once a year, under pain of mortal sin. But we are strongly recommended to go and purify our soul regularly, e.g. *at least once a month* (even if we are not guilty of mortal sins). Frequent confession, indeed, greatly helps us to overcome temptations, to keep in the state of grace, and to grow in virtue.
- Confession cannot be a collective ceremony of reconciliation (as it frequently happens in the modern Church), but must be *an individual confession*.

Purity of Intention

Frequent confession is very much encouraged by the Church, but must be done with great purity of intention.

- Sometimes it is rather low spirits than sin which sends us to confession; and this also with a very considerable admixture of self-love. We want comfort and consolation, because we are downcast; and we know that both these spiritual luxuries are for the most part to be found in confession. For either our confessor is very kind and indulgent and prone to talk long, or at least we can open our hearts to him in so piteous a way, making our confession a sort of elegy, with a dash of exaggeration, that we are nearly sure to elicit from him the honey of which we stand in need.
- Sometimes we have a general feeling of being all wrong with God. It is not so much from having some definite fault upon our consciences as from an equable and universal tepidity. So we go to confession to recover the sense of being right with God. We half know that what is wanted is more prayer, more honesty in mortification, a little more decisive separation from the world, and, above all, an instantaneous putting into execution of good resolutions, which have been hanging about us for weeks past, only partially resolved. Confession will give us for the time what a little smart severity with ourselves would give us permanently. So we go to confession first of all, and will discuss the question of severity later on.
- Sometimes people go to confession only for the purpose of direction. They use a great sacrament merely as a handle or occasion of something else, for another purpose, a good purpose, indeed, but a very inferior and subordinate one. Thus they do not take so much pain with their examination of conscience, their sorrow, and their purpose of amendment as they should do. They have come to talk and to listen; they have not come to confess. Direction is more attractive to them than confession. Plainly self is the centre and not God. Thus they confess, not invalidly, but unworthily.

These are the various motives which prevail in our minds at different times, when we go to confession. Not that in themselves these motives are necessarily wrong, except when they are dominant. The conclusion seems to be that we do not habitually go to confession looking simply, and steadfastly, and exclusively to God. We lack purity of intention. The consequence is that very little, comparatively speaking, comes from our frequent confessions.

7. Thou shalt not steal.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's property.

- Have I stolen? (*What value? What damage done to property or interests?*)
- Did I charge exorbitant prices?
- Did I falsely weigh and measure other people's goods?
- Did I cheat?
- Did I damage the property of others?
- Did I cheat during playtime?
- In case I found something that was not mine, did I try to return it to its owner?
- Did I conceal any fraud, theft, or damage, when in duty bound to give information?
- Did I delay in paying lawful debts, in making restitution, when able to make it?
- Did I neglect to make reasonable efforts and sacrifices in this matter, e.g. by gradually laying up the amount required?
- Was I indiscreet, reading letters addressed to others, etc?

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

- Did I commit perjury?
- Did I lie against someone's character?
- Did I reveal secrets or publish condemnatory secrets about others, even if they were true?
- Did I refuse or delay in restoring the good name I have blackened?
- Did I commit slander or detraction, and encourage these in others?
- Did I make baseless accusations, groundless suspicions, rash judgment of others, in my own mind?

(For all)

- Did I look at immodest pictures, shows, films, or read lewd publications, or listen to obscene songs?
- Did I keep any indecent material or download immodest pictures?
- Did I entertain immodest thoughts or consent to impure desires?
- Did I dress immodestly?
- Did I engage in lascivious dances or in conversations and jokes that could lead myself and others to commit sins against purity?
- Did I commit any impure actions alone (even for medical purposes)?
- Was I imprudent and provocative in my dealing with people of the opposite sex, whether married or not?
- Did I have impure touches, kisses?
- Did I engage in unlawful relationship?

(For married people)

- Was I married in the Church?
- Was I faithful to my wife/husband in my thoughts?
- Did I sin with another person (single, married)?
- Did I refuse the marriage debt to my husband/wife without sufficient reason?
- Did I practice Onanism (withdrawal method)?
- Did I use contraception or artificial means to avoid pregnancy?
- Was I sterilized at my request?
- Have I limited the number of children using natural methods without real necessity?
- In the use of marriage was I selfish and inconsiderate of the needs of my spouse?

5 steps for a good confession

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

1. Examination of conscience

We should make an earnest effort to call to mind all the sins we have committed since our last worthy confession.

2. Sorrow for sins

Three things are requisite for the validity of a confession:

- **contrition,**
- **confession,**
- **reparation.**

But among them, contrition is the most important, because some circumstances, such as illness, may excuse us from actually confessing to a priest, other circumstances, such as lack of funds, may delay the repayment of debts; whereas contrition is always an absolute condition of forgiveness of our sins.

3. Firm resolution never more to offend God

We must resolve not only to avoid sin but also the persons, places and things that may easily lead us to sin.

4. Confession of our sins to a Priest

We must tell all our sins (all our mortal sins, at least) to a priest, their kind and the number of times we have committed each one.

5. Penance imposed by the priest

The priest gives us a penance that we may make some atonement to God for our sins, receive help to avoid them in the future and make some satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to them.

Prayer before Confession

O Holy Ghost, source of all light, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me, and help me to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before Christ's judgment seat. Bring to my mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my sins, and the grace of a sincere confession, so that I may be forgiven and admitted into Thy everlasting friendship. Mary, my Mother, help me to make a good confession.

II. The Examination of Conscience

There are several ways to make a good examination of conscience.

- A rather common one consists in reviewing our life in the light of the 10 Commandments and the 6 Precepts of the Church, and see
 - *if,*
 - *how often,*
 - *how gravely* we have failed to keep them.
- Another way consists in reflecting on the basic Christian virtues (e.g.: faith, hope, love of God and neighbor, patience, purity, honesty, etc.), and see if we have practiced them or not.
- We must be aware of the *gravity* and the *number* of our sins, and if they were committed in *thoughts, words, deeds* or by *omission*.
- A sin is either venial or mortal.
It is mortal if these 3 conditions are fulfilled:
 - ◆ **grievous matter** (it must be seriously bad in itself, as blasphemy or impurity, for instance);
 - ◆ **full knowledge** (you must know what you are doing at the time you do it);
 - ◆ **full consent of the will** (you must do it freely, deliberately and willfully).

If one of these conditions is not satisfied, the sin is venial.

5. Thou shalt not kill.

- Did I commit abortion, or induce others to do so? (*a penalty of excommunication is added to the mortal sin, for those who know it.*)
- Have I wounded or injured others?
- Was I violent in thought, word, or act?
- Was I careless in leaving about poisons, dangerous drugs, weapons, etc.?
- Did I desire revenge, quarrels and fights?
- Did I show aversion or contempt for others?
- Did I refuse to speak to others, when addressed?
- Did I ignore offers of reconciliation, especially between relatives?
- Did I insult or say irritating words?
- Did I become sad at another's prosperity and rejoice over another's misfortune?
- Was I jealous at attentions shown to others?
- Did I become tyrannical in my behavior?
- Did I induce others to sin by word or example?
- Was I gluttonous, drunk? Did I make rash use of drugs, injure my health by over-indulgence, and/or by giving drink to others, knowing that they would abuse it?

6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

3 things must be remembered here especially:

1. the difference between being tempted and consenting;
2. the fact that impurity is always grievous matter and therefore, that it is a mortal sin if we have sufficient reflection and full consent of the will;
3. the fact that to entertain voluntarily impure thoughts in as far as they arouse carnal pleasure is already a mortal sin:
"Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28).
Hence the necessity of specifying whether these thoughts were fully consented to or not, and of accusing the number of the mortal ones.

(For Husbands and Wives)

- Did I put obstacles in the fulfillment of religious duties?
- Did I lack gentleness and consideration in regard to each other's faults?
- Did I commit unreasonable jealousy?
- Did I neglect household duties?
- Did I say injurious words?

(For Employers)

- Did I deny employees reasonable time for religious duties and instruction?
- Did I give bad example to them or allow others to do so?
- Did I withhold their lawful wages?
- Did I not care for them in sickness or injury?
- Did I dismiss them arbitrarily and without cause?

(For Employees)

- Did I disrespect my employers?
- Did I lack obedience in matters wherein I had bound myself to obey?
- Did I neglect my work?
- Did I waste time? Did I waste my employer's property, by dishonesty, carelessness, or neglect?

(For Professional Men and Public Officials)

- Was I guilty of lacking knowledge relating to the duties of my office or profession?
- Was I negligent in discharging my duties?
- Was I unjust or partial?
- Did I charge exorbitant fees?

(For Teachers)

- Did I neglect the progress of those confided to my care?
- Was I unjust, indiscreet, or did I give excessive punishment?
- Was I partial in treating my students?
- Did I give bad example, did I use loose and false maxims?

(For All)

- Was I disobedient to lawful authority (civil and religious)?

- Let us remember that a sin, even committed in thought alone, is a sin. The gravity of the matter (how serious it is) is the same as the deed to which the thought refers.
- All mortal sins must be accused in confession. For each of them, one must give:
 - ◆ the exact *number* of times, or at least, the frequency (for ex.: once a month for 2 years);
 - ◆ the *circumstances* which can change or aggravate the nature of the sin (for ex.: to steal in a church).
- If a mortal sin has been forgotten in confession, one may go to communion, for as it was not willfully omitted, it was wiped away with the rest by the sacramental absolution. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned the next time.
- If we had the misfortune to make a sacrilegious confession, then we have to confess, not only the concealed mortal sins, but also all mortal sins committed since the last good confession, including those already mentioned in the bad confession(s).

*Let your confession be **ENTIRE**.
Let your confession be **TRUTHFUL**.
Let your confession be **HUMBLE**.*

Preliminary questions

- When did I make my last confession?
- Was it a good confession? And if I voluntarily concealed mortal sins, did I go even so to Communion?
- Did I forget to confess some mortal sins in previous confessions?
- Did I receive Holy Communion without fasting (at least one hour)?
- At my last confession, did I make any special resolution? Have I been faithful to it?
- Did I say the penance imposed by the priest?

Questions based on the 10 Commandments of God

1. Thou shalt have no false gods before Me.

(Sins against the honor and worship due to God)

- Did I neglect prayer? *(a full month without prayer is grievous matter.)*
- Did I consult fortune-tellers; entertain superstitious practices and attach undue importance to dreams and omens?
- Did I tempt God by exposing myself to danger of soul, life or health, without grave cause?
- Did I commit a sacrilege by profane or superstitious use of blessed objects or profanation of places or things consecrated to God?
- Did I receive the Sacraments in a state of mortal sin?

(Sins against Faith)

- Did I have any wilful doubts about any articles of faith?
- Did I read or circulate books or writings against Catholic belief or practice?
- Did I join in any non-Catholic worship and/or ecumenical celebration?
- Did I deny my religion?
- Did I neglect means of religious instruction (listening to sermons, catechism, etc.)?

(Sins against Hope)

- Did I despair of God's mercy, or show a want of confidence in the power of His Grace to support us in trouble and in temptation?
- Did I murmur against God's providence?
- Did I presume on God's mercy, or on the supposed efficacy of certain pious practices, in order to continue in sin?

(Sins against Charity)

- Did I wilfully have rebellious thoughts against God?
- Did I boast of sin?
- Did I violate God's Law, or omit good works, through human respect?

2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

(Sins against God's most Holy Name)

- Did I take the Lord's name in vain?
- Did I curse someone?
- Did I take false, unlawful or unnecessary oaths?
- Did I join societies condemned by the Church?
- Did I break or defer lawful vows?
- Did I commit irreverence in churches (by talking, laughing, etc...) even when Mass or another religious office was going on?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.

- Did I work or make others work without necessity *(2 hours' work is considered a serious matter)* on Sundays and/or Holy Days of Obligation *(Christmas –25 December, Assumption –15 August)*?
- Did I ensure my family went to Mass?

4. Honor thy father and thy mother.

(For Children)

- Did I fail to show love to my parents and other relatives?
- Was I disrespectful or disobedient to them?
- Did I help them when I could?
- Did I disappoint them? How?
- Did I respect my teachers, my parish priest and other persons in authority?

(For Parents)

- Did I hate my children, give scandal to them by cursing, drinking, etc.?
- Did I show habitual partiality, without cause?
- Did I defer my children's Baptism? *(more than one month is considered serious matter.)*
- Did I neglect to watch over their bodily health, their religious instruction, the company they keep, the books they read, etc.?
- Did I fail to correct them when necessary?
- Did I become harsh or cruel in correction?
- Did I send my children to Protestant or other schools dangerous to their faith or morals?