

# A Guide to Confession

## Five Steps For a Good Confession

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

## Procedure in the Confessional

You say:

*"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been - (state the length of time) - since my last confession. These are my sins."*

Then tell your mortal sins and the number of times committed. If you have no mortal sin to confess, then confess the venial sins you have committed since your last confession. When you have finished telling your sins, you should say:

*"For these and all the sins of my past life I am truly sorry."*

The priest now gives the necessary advice, assigns your penance and asks you to say the Act of Contrition (in some form). Then wait and listen as the priest gives the absolution

Then say **Thank you, Father**, leave the confessional and perform the penance assigned by the priest.

## An Act of Contrition

**"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, 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 sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen."**

## The Differences in sins

There are two major kinds of sin: original and actual.

Actual sin is sin which people commit. There are two kinds of actual sin, mortal and venial.

Mortal sin is a horrible offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul. Three simultaneous conditions must be fulfilled for a mortal sin: (1) the act must be something very serious; (2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done; (3) the person must have sufficient freedom of the will. So I cannot commit a mortal sin if the matter is not serious (e.g., if I stole a small amount of money from my employer), or if I did not know what I was doing (e.g., if I were to hurt someone accidentally or unthinkingly), or if I did not act with full freedom (e.g., I was under physical or emotional pressure).

A Catholic should know well the difference between mortal and venial sins.

## Examination of Conscience

### 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 (horoscopes or ouija boards) 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?

### 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?

### 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?

### 5. You shall not kill.

Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion? Have I physically harmed anyone? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading them into sin?

Have I been angry or resentful?

Have I harbored hatred in my heart?

Have I been sterilized for reasons of birth control?

Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization?

### 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 before marriage or outside of marriage?

Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control?

Has each sexual act in my marriage been open to the transmission of new life?

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

Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity?

Do I seek to be pure in my thoughts, words and actions?

Am I careful to dress modestly, so as not to tempt others?

Have I been guilty of masturbation?

### 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 or at 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?

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

Have I lied?

Have I gossiped? Harmed someone's reputation?

Have I spoken behind someone else's back?

Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?

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 television, movies, books, magazines or internet? Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations? Do I listen to, or engage in, impure conversations or jokes?

### 10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

Am I jealous of what other people have? Do I envy other people's families or possessions?

Am I greedy or selfish?

Are material possessions the purpose of my life?

Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?

# An Examination of Conscience for Children

## by Fr. Edward Filardi, Gaithersburg, Maryland

### **I. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.**

Do I give time every day to God in prayer?

Do I put my trust in superstitions, good luck charms, rather than God alone?

Have I rejected any Church teaching or denied that I was a Catholic?

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

Have I used the words "God" or "Jesus" in anger or irreverently?

Have I used foul or ugly language? Have I wished evil on another?

### **III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.**

Have I missed Mass on Sunday or any holy day of obligation?

Do I arrive at church late or leave early? Do I try to be reverent and pay attention during Mass?

Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sunday?

Do I make Sunday a day of prayer or rest?

### **IV. Honor your father and your mother.**

Do I respect and obey my parents?

Have I dishonored or mistreated them by word or deed?

Am I willing to help around the house or must I be nagged a hundred times?

Do I try to get along with my brothers and sisters? Am I a tattletale or bully?

Do I give a good example, especially to younger siblings?

Do I respect others in authority: priests, nuns, police, old people, baby-sitters?

### **V. You shall not kill.**

Do I beat up others or hurt their bodies?

Do I say cruel things, or make fun of others to hurt their feelings?

Do I say mean things about others behind their backs?

Have I stopped speaking to anyone? Do I encourage others to do bad things?

Do I try to love all people, born and unborn?

### **VI. You shall not commit adultery.**

Do I treat my body and other people's bodies with purity and respect?

Do I look at television shows, movies, or pictures that are bad?

Am I modest in my speech and the clothes I wear?

### **VII. You shall not steal.**

Have I taken things that were not mine from a store or another person?

Have I destroyed or misused another person's property for fun?

Do I return things that I borrow? In good condition?

### **VIII. You shall not commit false witness against your neighbor.**

Am I honest in my school work?

Do I tell lies to make myself look good?

Do I tell lies to protect myself from punishment?

Do I tell lies that make another person look bad or get them in trouble?

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

Do I allow my parents to spend time with one another, or do I get jealous and want them to pay attention only to me?

Do I get mad when I have to share my friends?

Are there kids I will not play with or be mean to because they look different?

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

Am I jealous or envious of the things or abilities that others have?

Am I thankful to God and my parents for what they have given me?

Do I share the things I have with my family, friends and poor people?

### **The Act of Contrition**

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you 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 you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace to sin no more, to amend my life, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen.