

Guide to CONFESSION &
EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE
For Children & Youth

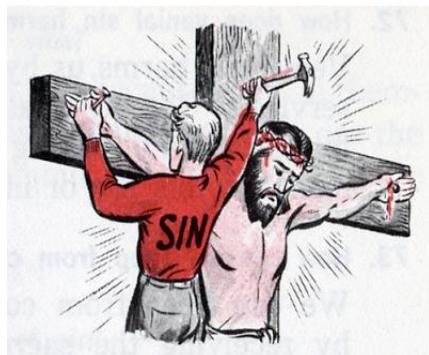


“Conduct yourself in holiness and devotion.”

2 Peter 3:11

What is sin?

Sin is breaking God's law. Accidents are not sins, since they are not done on purpose. All sins hurt our relationship with God. There are two kinds of sin: mortal and venial. **Mortal sin** is a serious offense against one of the Ten Commandments or Church laws that destroys our friendship with God and separates us from Him. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be met: (1) it must be serious; (2) it must be done knowing that it is wrong; and (3) it must be done with full consent. If a sin does not meet all three criteria, it is called a venial sin. **Venial sin** harms our relationship with God but does not destroy it.



What is Confession and why do I have to confess my sins to a priest?

All of us sin and hurt God by not obeying Him. But Jesus still loves us, and wants to forgive our sins and experience His infinite mercy. Immediately after rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to the Apostles, who were the first priests, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." (John 20:22-23) He gave us the Sacrament of Confession so that we could hear Him say, "You are forgiven," through the mouth of the priest. When we are sorry for our sins and tell them to the priest, Jesus himself forgives us. How awesome!

Do I have to confess all my sins?

To make a good Confession, you must tell the priest all the mortal sins you can remember and how often you committed them. (You are not required to confess venial sins, but doing so will help you grow in holiness.) If you choose not to confess a serious sin, none of the other sins you confess are forgiven, and you commit an additional serious sin. Some sins are embarrassing, and you might not want to tell them to anyone. But do not be afraid! Priests also sin and must confess their sins. They will not be shocked by anything you say, because they hear many confessions, and they are absolutely forbidden to reveal what has been confessed – no exceptions. A priest would rather die than break the seal of Confession.

Examination of Conscience

To make a good Confession, take some time with this guide to examine your conscience. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you remember your sins and to be truly sorry for them.

1. Preliminary questions: Begin by first asking yourself

- What sins do I especially regret having committed? What weighs on my conscience?
- Have I ever chosen not to confess a past serious sin, tried to hide such a sin, or lied about a sin?
- Have I failed to do the penance given to me by the priest?
- Do I have any habits of serious sin to confess first (like missing Sunday Mass, telling big lies, etc.)?

2. Have I kept the 10 Commandments?

1st Commandment *I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.* **Have I...**

- Put anything before God, like family, friends, sports, studies, video games, money, music, or popularity?
- Denied my Catholic faith in any way or avoided sharing it with others? Failed to pray every day?
- Stopped believing that God exists? Despaired of God's forgiveness, or taken it for granted?
- Believed in non-Christian doctrines (reincarnation, horoscopes, tarot cards, "Ouija" boards, etc.)?

2nd Commandment *You shall not take the Name of the Lord in vain.* **Have I...**

- Used the words “God” or “Jesus” disrespectfully? Said, “Oh, my God!” and not finished the sentence?
- Spoken irreverently of God or of sacred things? Cursed or used vulgar or inappropriate language?
- Been embarrassed or afraid to talk about God? Made jokes about the Church or holy things?

3rd Commandment *Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy.* **Have I...**

- Missed Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation? If my family doesn't attend Sunday Mass each week, have I made an effort to invite or encourage them to start?
- Arrived late to Mass? Left Mass early? Not fasted before Mass (one hour before Holy Communion)?
- Failed to pay attention at Mass and show reverence to the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Behaved poorly during Mass or chewed gum or eaten food during Mass?
- Done work on Sunday that was not necessary?
- Eaten meat on a Friday of Lent? Failed to do some penance on other Fridays of the year?

4th Commandment *Honor your father and your mother.* **Have I...**

- Spoken rudely or talked back to my parents or other people in authority?
- Not helped around the house and done what I am asked?
- Not prayed for my parents and relatives?
- Not done what is expected of me at school? Done the bare minimum instead of my best?
- Not cared for or helped my siblings and elderly members of my family?
- Not lived the faith as the Church and my family taught me?

5th Commandment *You shall not kill.* **Have I...**

- Hurt or bullied others? Said mean things about family members, classmates, teachers, or anyone?
- Failed to love all people, born and unborn, young and old?
- Encouraged others to do things I know are wrong?
- Become unjustly angry, impatient, envious, or hateful? Engaged in race-based hatred?
- Mistreated my body? Drank alcohol? Smoked cigarettes? Used drugs?

6th & 9th Commandments *You shall not commit adultery or covet your neighbor's wife.* **Have I...**

- Not treated my body and other people's bodies with purity and respect?
- Looked at inappropriate websites, shows, movies, or pictures?
- Been immodest in my speech and the clothes I wear? Been overly concerned with what I look like or the clothes I wear?
- Avoided or been mean to kids who look or act differently?

7th & 10th Commandments *You shall not steal or covet your neighbor's goods.* **Have I...**

- Stolen anything? Helped or encouraged others to steal? Failed to make amends for stolen goods?
- Destroyed or misused another person's property?
- Been jealous of other people's gifts, talents, or looks?
- Not been grateful for the person God made me?

8th Commandment *You shall not bear false witness.* **Have I...**

- Lied? Thought that small lies are okay? Been afraid to tell the truth, out of fear of punishment? Told lies to make another person look bad or get them into trouble? Told lies to make myself look good?
- Gossiped or revealed others' faults or sins unnecessarily?
- Cheated or been dishonest on a test or assignment? Helped someone else cheat?

How to go to Confession

1. Prepare yourself by reviewing the examination of conscience above.
2. When you come into the confessional, the priest will make the sign of the cross, and you should cross yourself, too.
3. Then say, **“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ weeks/months/years since my last confession. Since that time I have committed these sins...”**
4. Tell the priest all the sins you can remember and how many times you have committed them. First tell him your serious (mortal) sins, then the lesser (venial) sins. If you are not sure about a sin, ask the priest about it. He may give you advice and may ask you some questions. Be as open as possible. The priest is there out of care and concern for you.
5. After you finish telling the priest your sins, say, **“For these and all the sins of my past, I am truly sorry.”**
6. The priest will then give you a penance to do. (For example, “Pray 3 Hail Marys.”) It is important to do the penance as soon as possible after leaving the confessional.
7. The priest will ask you to say the **Act of Contrition:**

O 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

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

8. The priest absolves you from your sins, and you are FORGIVEN. (Make the sign of the cross when Father says “...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”)
9. The priest says, “Go in peace.” You respond, **“Thanks be to God. Thank you, Father.”**
10. Remember to do your penance as soon as you leave the Confessional. Doing penance shows our true sorrow for choosing sin, and it helps to repair the damage done by our sins.

Parish of
Saints Joachim & Anne



and Shakopee Area
Catholic School

Images

(Cover) “The Nativity,” window at the Church of St. Mark, Shakopee, photo by Jeremy McColm, used with permission.

(Inside) “Sin,” *St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism*, Official Revised Edition (Totowa, New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 2011), p. 41.