

zListen to the words of absolution attentively. At the end answer: "Amen." Be willing to do the penance as soon as possible. This penance will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

After Confession

Give thanks to God for having forgiven you once again.

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.

If you recall some serious sin that you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to include it in your next Confession.

Rite of Confession

After the customary greetings, the penitent crosses himself:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The priest urges the penitent to have confidence in God. The priest may say:

May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess your sins with true sorrow.

Either the priest or the penitent may read or say by heart some words taken from the holy Scripture about the mercy of God and repentance, e.g.:

"Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you (John 21:17),"

The penitent accuses himself of his sins. The priest gives opportune advice, imposes the penance on him, and invites the penitent to manifest his contrition. The penitent may say, for example:

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

The priest gives him the absolution: God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The penitent answers: **Amen** The priest dismisses the penitent with this or any of the alternative formula:

May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

The penitent should fulfill the penance imposed.

Source: *Handbook of Prayers*. Rev. James Socias, General Editor. Scepter Press and Midwest Theological Forum. Used with permission.

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Pamphlet 114

Short Examination of Conscience

"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 himself is waiting for you. He will heal you; and you will be at peace with God!" (Homily of pope John Paul II on September 13, 1987, at Westover Hills, San Antonio, Texas).

The basic requirement for a good Confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the *Prodigal son* and of acknowledging our sins with true sorrow before his representative, the priest.

Examination of Conscience

Examine your conscience. Recall your sins. Calmly ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's Commandments.

Short Examination of Conscience

When was my last good confession?

Did I receive Communion or other sacraments while in the state of mortal sin?

Did I intentionally fail to confess some mortal sin in my previous confession?

Did I willfully and seriously doubt my faith or put myself in danger of losing it by reading literature hostile to Catholic teachings or by getting involved with non-Catholic sects?

Did I engage in superstitious activities: palm reading, fortune telling?

Did I take the name of God in vain?

Did I curse or take a false oath?
 Did I use bad language?
 Did I miss Mass on a Sunday or a holy" day of obligation through my own fault, without any serious reason?
 Did fast and abstain on the prescribed days?
 Did I disobey my parents or lawful superiors in important matters? .
 Was I selfish in how I treated others especially my spouse, my brothers and sisters, my relatives, or my friends?
 Did I hatefully quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge?
 Did I refuse to forgive? Did I cause physical injury or even death?
 Did I get drunk?
 Did I take illicit drugs?
 Did I consent to, advise, or actively take part in an abortion?
 Did I willfully look at indecent pictures or watch immoral movies?
 Did I read immoral books or magazines?
 Did I engage in impure jokes or conversations?
 Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or feelings? Did I commit impure acts, alone or with others?
 Did I take contraceptive or abortifacient pills, or use other artificial means in order to prevent conception?
 Did I steal or damage another's property? How much? Have I made reparation for the damages done? Have I been honest in my business relations?
 Did I tell lies?
 Did I sin by slander? By detraction - telling unknown grave faults of others without necessity?
 Did I judge others rashly in serious matters? Have I tried to make restitution for any damage of reputation that I have caused? .

If you remember other serious sins besides those indicated here, include them also in your Confession:

Before Confession

Be truly sorry for your sins.

The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God (which is reborn with repentance). Understood in this way, *contrition* is, therefore, the beginning and the heart of conversion, of that evangelical *metanoia* which brings the person back to God like the Prodigal Son returning to his father, and which has in the sacrament of Penance its visible sign, and which perfects attrition (imperfect contrition – born of the consideration of sin's ugliness or the fear of eternal damnation and other penalties threatening the sinner) [Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio of Paenitentia*, 31, 1983.; cf. CCC, 1453].

The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic.

This does not mean that one has to promise never to fall again into sin. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

Act of Contrition

O 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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

You are now ready to go to Confession.

During Confession

You can begin your confession by making the Sign of the Cross and greeting the priest: "**Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.**"

The priest gives you a blessing. One response you might give is these words St. Peter said to Christ: "**Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you**" (Jn 21:17). One then continues with the time since one's last confession: "**My last good confession was... (approximately how many weeks, months or years).**"

Say the sins that you remember. Start with the one that is most difficult to say; after this it will be easier to mention the rest. If you received general absolution, tell this to the priest and mention the sins forgiven then.

If you do not know how to confess or you feel uneasy or ashamed, simply ask the priest to assist you, be assured that he will help you to make a good confession. Simply answer his questions without hiding anything out of shame or fear. Place your trust in God: he is your merciful Father and wants to forgive you.

If you do not remember any serious sins, be sure to confess at least some of your venial sins, adding at the end: "**I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life, especially for ...** (mention in general any past sin for which you are particularly sorry; for example, all my sins against charity)."

The priest will assign you some penance and give you some advice to help you to be a better Christian.