

A College Student's Guide to Examining Your Conscience

Created to help you
prepare for & experience
the healing power of
God's mercy in the
Sacrament of
Reconciliation



to begin:

Using an examination of conscience helps us more easily call to mind our sins and failings as we prepare for Confession. It's best to use during a period of quiet reflection before participating in the sacrament of reconciliation.

This will help us to consider what sins we are guilty of and makes us aware of sins we might not realize as sins. It's also a chance to develop and form our consciences regularly, which is critical to living the faith.

- Start by praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for help in making a good examination to prepare for Confession.
- Read through the matters of this list and honestly reflect on your behavior for each.
- Make a print out or screenshot the guide on your phone to bring with you to confession if needed
- Use the journal pages in the back to keep track of last confession, penances, etc.

step by step

in the confessional:

- 1) After examining your conscience, begin your confession by saying: "Forgive me father for I have sinned, it has been [X amount of time] since my last confession, these are my sins..."
- 2) Confess your sins as honestly and openly as you can: remember you are speaking to Christ.
- 3) After giving you your penance, the priest will ask you to say your Act of Contrition out loud
- 4) The priest will give you the blessing of Absolution and you can respond with **Amen**.
- 5) As a final blessing the priest will say "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace" and you respond, "Thanks be to God."
- 6) It is a good idea to complete your penance directly after confession, if possible!
- 7) Walk in the freedom that you have as a forgiven child of God!



pray

Lord, help us to examine my life honestly. Help me to see the things that keep me from being the person you created me to be, and give me the desire and the grace to change.

In Jesus' mighty name,
Amen

mortal sin vs. venial sin:

a mortal sin is committed when there is:

Full Knowledge that the act (thought, word or omission) was contrary to God's will (sinful) is possessed by the offender

Full Consent (with intentionality; i.e., not forced) is held by the one committing the sin

Grave Matter (anything under the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church) is the circumstances of the sin.

If any of these three conditions are not met the sin is to be known as venial.

It is still good to confess venial sins, since these sins (like all sins) offend God Who deserves all of our love.

Remember: the priest is bound under oath (and the possibility of excommunication) if ever reveals anything said in the confessional. No matter how grievous the sin, do not be afraid. Admit your failings openly and trust in God's mercy.

Examination of Conscience

This will guide you through an examination based on the 10 commandments as you prepare for confession

1

I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.

Have I...

- Reserved or harbored hatred for God?
- Disobeyed the commandments of God or the Church?
- Refused to accept what God has revealed as true, or what the Catholic Church proclaims for belief?
- Denied the existence of God?
- Neglected to nourish and protect my faith?
- Neglected to reject everything opposed to a sound faith?
- Deliberately misled others about doctrine or the faith?
- Rejected the Catholic faith, joined another Christian denomination, or joined or practiced another religion?
- Joined a group forbidden to Catholics (Masons, communists, etc.)?
- Despaired about my salvation or the forgiveness of my sins?
- Presumed God's mercy? (Committing a sin in expectation of forgiveness, or asking for forgiveness without interior conversion and practicing virtue.)
- Loved someone or something more than God (money, power, sex, ambition, etc.)?
- Let someone or something influence my choices more than God?
- Engaged in superstitious practices? (Incl. horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc.)
- Been involved in the occult or occult practices? (Séances, Ouija board, worship of Satan, etc.)

2

YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF
THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

Have I...

- Used the name of God in cursing or blasphemy?
- Failed to keep vows, promises, or resolutions that I have made to God? [specify in the confessional which one; the Priest has authority to remove the obligations of promises and resolutions if they are too rash or unjust]
- Spoken about the Faith, the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence, hatred or defiance?
- Watched television or movies, or listened to music that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
- Used vulgar, suggestive or obscene speech?
- Belittled others in my speech?
- Behaved disrespectfully in the church building (e.g., talking immoderately in church before, during, after holy Mass)?
- Misused places or things set apart for the worship of God?
- Committed perjury? (Breaking an oath or lying under oath.)
- Blamed God for my failings?

3

REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH DAY.

Have I...

- Missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days (through own fault w/o sufficient reason)?
- Neglected to set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
- Committed a sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament (thrown Him away; brought Him home; treated Him carelessly, etc.)?
- Received any sacrament while in the state of mortal sin?
- Habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass?
- Shop, labor, or do business unnecessarily on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Eaten or drunken within one hour of receiving Communion (other than medical need)?

Have I...

- (If still under my parents' care) Obeyed all that my parents reasonably asked of me?
- Shown disregard for my parents wishes, displayed contempt of their demands, and/or disdained their very being?
- Neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
- Harbored hatred for my parents?
- Brought shame on them?
- (If still in school) Obeyed the reasonable demands of my teachers?
- Disrespected my teachers?
- Broken any just law?
- Supported or voted for a politician whose positions are opposed to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church?
- Failed to pray for the deceased members of my family . . . the Poor Souls of Purgatory included?

Have I...

- Unjustly and intentionally killed a human being (murder)? Been guilty, through negligence and/or lacking of intention, of the death of another (killing)?
- Been involved in an abortion, directly or indirectly (through advice, encouragement, providing money, or facilitating it in any other way)?
- Seriously considered or attempted suicide?
- Supported, promoted, or encouraged the practice of assisted suicide or mercy killing(euthanasia)?
- Unjustly inflicted bodily harm on another person?
- Unjustly threatened another person with bodily harm?
- Verbally or emotionally abused another person?
- Been prejudiced, or unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, sex or religion?
- Purposely provoked another by teasing or nagging?
- Recklessly endangered my life or health, or that of another, by my actions?
- Driven recklessly or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
- Abused alcohol or other drugs?
- Sold or given drugs to others to use for non-therapeutic purposes?
- Indulged in unjust anger?
- Been unforgiving of others, especially when mercy or pardon was requested?
- Sought revenge or delighted to see someone else get hurt or suffer?
- Treated animals cruelly, causing them to suffer or die needlessly?

6

YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

(The sixth commandment teaches us to keep our promises, and to protect our sexuality)

Have I...

- Do I value and respect my sexuality?
- Do I try to develop healthy relationships and avoid relationships where people are treated like things?
- Do I dishonor my body through impure actions?
- Do I respect the relationship God has set up between sexual intimacy and marriage?
- Masturbated? (Deliberate stimulation of one's own sexual organs for sexual pleasure outside of the conjugal act.) (Catechism, 2366)

7

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

Have I...

- Taken things that don't belong to me?
- Disrespected public property and the property of other people?
- Shared generously with others?
- Cheated on tests or homework?
- Allowed myself to be conformed to a consumer mentality (buy, buy buy, throw away, waste, spend, spend, spend)?
- Neglected to practice the corporal works of mercy?
- Deliberately defaced, destroyed or lost another's property?

8

YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

Have I...

- Strived to remain a truthful person?
- Damaged the reputation of another person by exaggerating or making up stories about them?
- Gossiped?
- Said things just to hurt other people?
- Lied to stay out of trouble or to avoid a difficult situation, even if someone will be hurt?

9

YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

(The ninth commandment teaches us to avoid inappropriate relationships)

Have I...

- Do I remember that all people are created in the image of God? Am I envious of others? Do I resent their popularity or success?
- Do I feel I have to put others down in order to feel better about myself?
- Purposely dressed immodestly?
- Committed other sins that have put myself or another person in a harmful relationship?

Have I...

- Taken things that don't belong to me?
- Disrespected public property and the property of other people?
- Shared generously with others?
- Cheated on tests or homework?
- Allowed myself to be conformed to a consumer mentality (buy, throw away, waste, spend, repeat)?
- Neglected to practice the corporal works of mercy?
- Deliberately defaced, destroyed or lost another's property?

"Make your confession before Me. The person of the priest is, for Me, only a screen. Never analyze what sort of a priest it is that I am making use of; open your soul in confession as you would to Me, and I will fill it with My light."

(Diary of St. Faustina, 1725)

ACT OF

contrition:

NOTE: An act of contrition is an expression to God of the sorrow of the penitent. There is no required formula for this and it may be very simple such as "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

If you don't want to make up your own, here is one of the traditional prayers:

"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, 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 and to avoid the near occasions of sin." .



DATE:

CONFESSION

journal:

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You can use this space to write down your own act of contrition, certain things you want to confess, keep track of your penances, etc.

DATE:

CONFESSION

journal:

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MY LAST
CONFESSION WAS:

PENANCE:

