

# Appendix

## A Guide to Confession and an Examination of Conscience

*This guide is reproduced by permission of the Archdiocese of Washington. It was created as a part of “The Light Is ON for You” program and can be found online at [www.adw.org/parishes/tlio/guide.html](http://www.adw.org/parishes/tlio/guide.html)*

The Sacrament of Penance, or Confession, brings about a change of heart through God’s mercy and forgiveness. Experience the Lord’s compassion through the Sacrament of Penance, which is made up of the following parts: Before, During, and After.

### Before

#### *How to Make a Good Confession*

Confession is not difficult, but it does require preparation. We should begin with prayer, placing ourselves in the presence of God, our loving Father. We seek healing and forgiveness through repentance and a resolve to sin no more. Then we review our lives since our last confession, searching our thoughts, words, and actions for that which did not conform to God’s command to

love him and one another through his laws and the laws of his Church. This is called an examination of conscience.

To make an examination of conscience:

- Begin with a prayer asking for God's help.
- Review your life with the help of some questions, which are based on the Ten Commandments (see below).
- Tell God how truly sorry you are for your sins.
- Make a firm resolution not to sin again.

### *Examination of Conscience*

Recall your sins. Prayerfully ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's and the Church's commandments.

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, 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 him or her into sin?
  - Have I been angry or resentful?
  - Have I harbored hatred in my heart?
  - Have I mutilated myself through any form of sterilization?

- 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 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 been guilty of masturbation?
  - Have I sought to control my thoughts?
  - 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 chaste in my thoughts, words and actions?
  - Am I careful to dress modestly?
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 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?
  - Have I spoken behind someone else's back?
  - Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
  - 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 reading, movies, conversation, or curiosity?
  - Do I seek to control my imagination?
  - Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?
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 young people, for married couples, and for single people can be found at: [www.adw.org/parishes/tlio/guide.html](http://www.adw.org/parishes/tlio/guide.html).

## During

### *What is Reconciliation?*

Reconciliation (also known as Confession or Penance) is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in His love and mercy to offer sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God. At the same time, sinners reconcile with the Church because it is also wounded by our sins.

Every time we sin, we hurt ourselves, other people, and God. In Reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and his Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and his Church, make reparation for what we have done, and resolve to do better in the future.

The forgiveness of sins involves four parts:

- **Contrition:** a sincere sorrow for having offended God, and the most important act of the penitent. There can be no forgiveness of sin if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.
- **Confession:** confronting our sins in a profound way to God by speaking about them—aloud—to the priest.
- **Penance:** an important part of our healing is the “penance” the priest imposes in reparation for our sins.
- **Absolution:** the priest speaks the words by which “God, the Father of Mercies” reconciles a sinner to himself through the merits of the Cross.

## ***Rite of Reconciliation***

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is the most comfortable for you.

The priest gives you a blessing or greeting. He may share a brief Scripture passage.

Make the Sign of the Cross and say: "Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was . . . (give the number of weeks, months, or years).

Confess all of your sins to the priest. The priest will help you to make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or you feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive you.

Following your confession of sins, say: "I am sorry for these and all of my sins."

The priest assigns you a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.

Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

## ***Act of Contrition***

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, do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

## **After**

Rejoice! You have received the forgiveness of Christ! What should you do when you leave? Remember the words you recited in the Act of Contrition: “I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.”

Before you leave the confessional, the priest will give you your penance, which may consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, or sacrifices. These works help to join us with Christ, who alone died for us. The goal of our life’s journey is to grow closer to God. We can do this through prayer, spiritual reading, fasting, and the reception of the sacraments.

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