

# Guide to First Confession

## Step 1: Make a Good Examination of Conscience

Read the “Suggestions for a Good Examination of Conscience” on the other side of this sheet.

## Step 2: Confess Your Sins to the Priest

Go into the confessional. You have the choice to kneel at the screen or sit to talk face-to-face with the priest. The priest should welcome you kindly.

Make the Sign of the Cross, and say these words:

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.  
This is my first confession.  
These are my sins...

Tell all your sins openly and honestly, including the number of times each sin was committed. Then, listen to the priest and follow his instructions. You may also ask any questions about the Faith or how to grow in holiness.

## Step 3: Be Sorry for Your Sins

Pray the Act of Contrition when the priest tells you.

### 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.

# Guide to First Confession (CONTINUED)

## Step 4: Intend to Change

The priest will ask you to do a penance, usually some prayers or some action. Your penance is to show that you are truly sorry for your sins and to help you avoid sin in the future. This is done when you return to your pew, or very soon after you leave the church.

Then the priest, acting in the person of Jesus Christ, will absolve (forgive) you of your sins with the following words:

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 of your sins,  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Make the Sign of the Cross, and say “Amen”.

## Step 5: Do Your Penance

After you return to your pew, do the penance the priest assigns you. Tell God that you are thankful for the grace of reconciliation that you have just received.

# Suggestions for a Good Examination of Conscience

## Recall Your Sins

Pray to the Holy Spirit for self-knowledge and trust in the mercy of God. Take a few minutes to think about what you have done against God's Commandments. Read the suggestions below for each Commandment.

### 1. I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me.

- Do I love God above all things?
- Did I put anything or anyone before God?
- Does my work, my things, my image to others rule my life instead of God?
- Do I give God time every day in prayer?

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

- Did I curse or swear or use bad language that included God's name?
- Did I use God's name lightly or carelessly or with a lack of respect?
- Did I use God's name in anger?
- Have I always used God's name with love and reverence?

### 3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Saturday evenings?
- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Holy Days of Obligation?
- Did I receive Holy Communion at least once this year?
- Do I keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest, and relaxation?

### 4. Honor your father and your mother.

- Have I shown love and respect for my parents?
- Did I honor and obey my parents and teachers?
- Have I talked back or failed to help at home?
- Have I done my chores or work without complaining?

### 5. You shall not kill.

- Did I argue with or hate anyone, or desire revenge?
- Did I fight with or hurt someone?
- Did I refuse to forgive someone?
- Have I killed someone with gossip or by what I said?

### 6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I used foul language or told impure jokes?
- Did I willfully watch indecent shows or movies?
- Did I look at impure books, magazines or internet pages?
- Do I dress and behave modestly?

### 7. You shall not steal.

- Did I steal what is not mine?
- Did I damage someone else's property?
- Did I cheat on tests or homework, or cheat anyone of what I owe?
- Have I stolen videos, music or software?

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

- Do I always tell the truth?
- Am I sincere in all that I do, and do I keep my promises?
- Have I lied or told secrets?
- Have I ruined the good name of someone by spreading lies about them?

### 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- Have I allowed impure thoughts?
- Did I fail to control my imagination?
- Do I try to think of holy and pure things?
- Have I rejected my family in my heart?

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

- Am I jealous of what another person has?
- Am I moody or gloomy or negative with others?
- Is my heart greedy or want things that are not really needed?
- Am I grateful for the gifts that God has given to me?

Adapted from "A Reconciliation Pocket Guide", from the Knights of Columbus, "ABCs of Confession" from St. Mary of the Angels, and "Examination of Conscience" from LifeTeen.

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