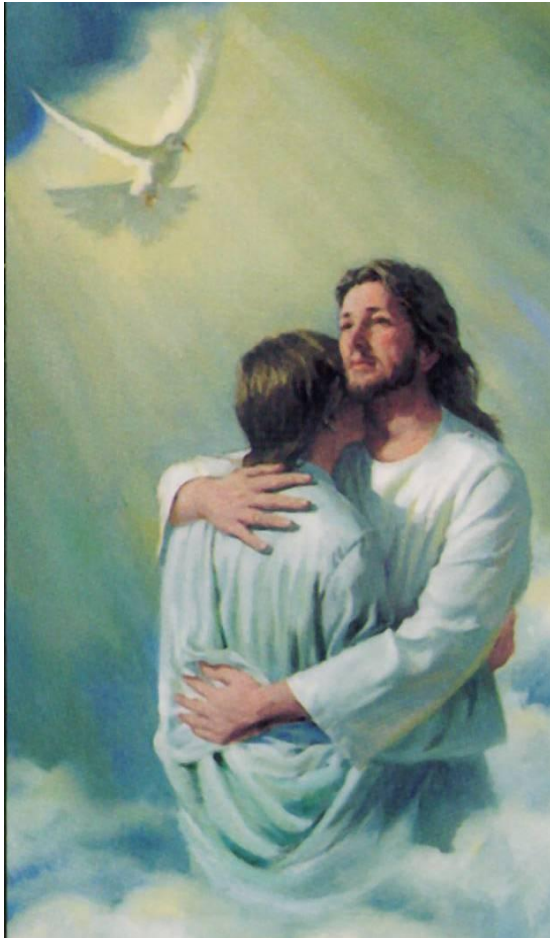


***A Guide for Confession
for adults***



***Meeting our Loving and
Merciful Lord***

Guide for Confession

This short guide is written to help you prepare yourselves for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Our Lord's Love and Mercy

Our Lord Jesus Christ doesn't condemn us (or see us as bad persons). He desires to embrace us with his love and mercy when we approach him with sincere sorrow through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Jesus understands our fears and struggles and listens to us with a gentle, compassionate and understanding heart. There is no need to be afraid to approach Jesus through the priest, who stands in the person of Christ. Our Lord loves us with an undying love. His heart goes out to us. We have hope in his love and faith in his mercy. Jesus desires that we be united with him in heaven and provides us with the opportunities and graces to help us achieve this union.

Sin

We are called to live a life of love and holiness. Sin is a violation of love and an offense against the holiness of God. It is "any willful, deliberate thought, word, desire, action or omission which is contrary to the Commandments of God." What is important is the desire to be a good and holy person; and then to recognize sin, have a hatred for sin, and try to avoid sin. The Catholic Church has always recognized two kinds of sin: mortal sin and venial sin.

Mortal Sin

"Mortal sin is a grave infraction of the law of God that destroys the divine life in the soul of the sinner (sanctifying grace), constituting a turn away from God." [CCC Glossary] "For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present: ***grave matter, full knowledge of the evil of the act, and full consent of the will.***" [CCC 1857]

We can objectively judge whether an act is grave matter or not. The knowledge and consent, however, are subjective and left to the judgment of God. We cannot, for example, say a particular person is going to hell for an act that is grave matter, because we cannot judge whether the other

two conditions are met. However, if the three conditions for a mortal sin are met, a person has committed a mortal sin. If that person doesn't desire or seek repentance or forgiveness and that person dies in the state of mortal sin, that person has condemned himself / herself to eternal separation from God. [CCC 1861]

Some *examples of grave matter*: murder (includes abortion, euthanasia, suicide), intentionally causing serious bodily harm to another person, robbery, adultery, fornication (sex outside of marriage), rape, taking or selling illegal drugs, abuse of alcohol, drinking and driving, masturbation, perjury, homosexual practices, contraception, slander (if it causes great harm to another person). According to the Catechism, "...the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a *grave sin*." [CCC 2181].

Venial Sin

"One commits venial sin when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full knowledge or without complete consent." [CCC 1862]

Venial sin weakens charity, impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good, and, if deliberate and unrepented, disposes a person little by little to commit mortal sin. Venial sin, however, does not deprive a person of sanctifying grace, like a mortal sin does. [CCC 1863]

The Importance of the Eucharist in Dealing with Sin

Reception of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) separates us from sin. The Eucharist strengthens our charity. "This living charity wipes away venial sins" and "preserves us from future moral sins." "The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin." Although venial sins can be forgiven through reception of the Eucharist, forgiveness of mortal sins requires the Sacrament of Reconciliation. [CCC 1393-1395]

Gravity of Sins

There are degrees of gravity among sin, e.g., murder is graver than theft; the person who promotes or sells drugs commits a graver mortal sin than the person who abuses drugs. One must also take into account who is wronged, e.g., violence against parents is in itself graver than violence against a stranger. [CCC 1858]

How to Go to Confession

Prepare for Confession

1. Do an Examination of Conscience (See Aid below).
2. You must have contrition for your sins, that is:
 - a. Sorrow for sins committed
 - b. Hatred for sins committed
 - c. Resolution not to sin again.

Going to Confession

1. RECEPTION OF THE PENITENT

The priest welcomes the penitent and greets him with kindness. The penitent along with the priest makes the sign of the cross:

Priest: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Penitent: Amen.

The priest may invite the penitent to have trust in God, in these or similar words:

Priest: May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy.

Penitent: Amen.

2. READING OF THE WORD OF GOD (*Optional*)

Priest: Let us listen to the Lord as he speaks to us through the Scriptures. (*He then reads a short passage.*)

3. CONFESSION OF SINS AND ACCEPTANCE OF SATISFACTION

Priest: How long has been since your last confession?

Penitent: (*Mention the amount of time since you last confessed.*)

Priest: What are your sins?

Or, the penitent can say a general formula for confession before he confesses his sins, such as:

Bless me father for I have sinned my last confession was...

Penitent: (*Confess your sins.*)

Priest: For your penance...

Priest: Now, please say your Act of Contrition.

Penitent: (*Say one of the following Act of Contritions.*)

Penitent: Lord God, I love you above all things. In your goodness have mercy on me: do not look on my sins, but take away all my guilt. Create in me a clean heart and renew within me an upright spirit.

Or

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 I have offended 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.

Priest: (Prays the prayer of 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 grant 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.

Penitent: Amen.

4. DISMISSAL

Priest: Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.

Penitent: Thanks be to God.

or

Thank you Father.

An Aid to Examination of Conscience

(Taken from "An Examination of Conscience" by Fr. Robert Altier)

Mortal Sins – Examples of Grave Matter

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Involvement in occult practices
- Involvement in or adherence to New Age or Eastern philosophies, atheism or agnosticism
- Apostasy (leaving the Church)
- Adherence to a schismatic group
- Putting faith in superstition, e.g., horoscopes, good luck charms, etc.
- Joining the Masons or other secret society
- Receiving sacraments – Eucharist, Confession, or Marriage in the state of moral sin.
- Being married outside the church (without a dispensation)
- Willfully denying the Faith of the Catholic Church
- Despair of God's grace or mercy
- Presumption (committing a moral sin with the idea that you can just go to confession)
- Hatred of God
- Simony (buying or selling spiritual things)
- Desecration of the Holy Eucharist

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

- Using God's name intentionally as a curse
- Seriously wishing evil upon another
- Serious slander or insult of a sacred person
- Telling a lie or withholding a serious sin in confession
- Blasphemy (words of hatred, reproach or defiance toward God; speaking ill of God)
- Perjury

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Missing Mass on Sunday or a Holy day without a serious reason
- Intentional failure to fast or abstain on appointed days
- Requiring employees to work on Sunday in non-essential occupations

4. Honor your father and mother.

- Serious failure to care for aged parents
- Serious neglect of the duties of one's state in life
- Serious disrespect for or disobedience to parents, superiors or authorities
- Wishing death or evil on parents
- Abuse of parents
- Failure to baptize children in a reasonable time (within a few months) after birth
- Serious neglect of the religious education or upbringing of children

5. You shall not kill.

- Murder, homicide, manslaughter
- Procuring an abortion
- Promoting, counseling or paying for an abortion
- Willfully injuring or trying to hurt another person
- Willfully leading another into serious sin
- Driving dangerously or recklessly
- Driving under the influence of drugs / alcohol
- Taking or selling illegal drugs
- Willful drunkenness
- Self-mutilation
- Excessive tattoos / Excessive body piercing
- Sterilization
- Promotion of or involvement in euthanasia
- Serious entertainment of suicidal thoughts
- Attempting or intending suicide
- Willful failure to bury the body or ashes of the dead
- Willful engagement in unjust lawsuits
- Bigotry
- Intentionally placing temptation before the weak

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Adultery
- Fornication (intercourse prior to marriage)
- Masturbation or other impure acts with self
- Homosexual acts

- Using contraceptives
- Dressing or acting in a manner intended to cause arouse in another (spouses excepted)
- Kissing or touching another passionately for the purpose of arousal (spouses excepted)
- Intentionally causing a sexual climax outside of intercourse
- Onanism, i.e, intentional withdrawal and non-vaginal ejaculation
- Flagrant immodesty in dress
- Bestiality (sexual acts with animals)
- Oral sex (permitted as foreplay in marriage)
- Anal sex or other degrading sex practices
- Prostitution
- Rape
- In-vitro fertilization or artificial insemination
- Surrogate motherhood
- "Selective reduction" of babies in the womb
- Types of fertility testing that involve immoral acts
- Involvement in or support of human cloning
- Willful divorce or desertion
- Incest
- Polygamy or polyandry
- Cohabitation prior to marriage
- Destroying the innocence of another by seducing or introducing them to immorality
- Transvestism or cross-dressing

7. You shall not steal.

- Stealing a large amount of money or valuable item
- Willfully destroying or defacing another's property
- Buying, selling, receiving, or concealing items known to be stolen
- Willful failure to make restitution
- Excessive gambling
- Defrauding workers of their wages
- Serious failure to fulfill work requirements
- Padding expense or per diem accounts
- Taking advantage of the poor, needy or destitute when able to help them easily
- Defrauding creditors

- Bribery or taking bribes
- Blackmail
- Fraud or embezzlement
- Price fixing
- Tax evasion
- Forgery
- Excessive waste or expense
- Pirating computer software
- Slavery
- Serious cruelty to animals

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

- False witness or perjury
- Telling large or premeditated lies
- Serious gossip, detraction (revealing the faults of another without serious reason), or calumny (harming the reputation of another by falsities)
- Violation of confident without good reason
- Being an accomplice to another's grave sin

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- Pornography
- Reading sexually explicit materials
- Dwelling on impure thoughts or fantasies for the purpose of arousal
- Willfully lusting after another

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- Serious and willful greed or avarice
- Intention to steal or destroy the goods of another

Venial Sins

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Failure to pray on a daily basis
- Not trying to love God with my whole mind, heart, soul, and strength
- Entertaining doubts against the Faith
- Failing to seek out or learn the teaching of the Church
- Indifference or ingratitude to God
- Lukewarmness in the relationship with God
- Spiritual sloth
- Putting other things or people before God
- Attachment to human respect or affection, i.e., caring more about what others think than what God thinks in order to fit in or be liked
- Not trusting God
- Failure to fulfill the duties of one's state in life
- Playing Dungeons and Dragons or similar games
- Tempting God
- Being angry at God
- Failure to support the work of the Church monetarily and / or with time and talent
- Not taking part in the work of evangelization
- Being willfully distracted at Mass or in prayer
- Putting off confession needlessly
- Refusing or denying the mercy of God
- Failure to pray when tempted
- Giving into depression, self-pity or self-deprecating thoughts

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

- Using the Lord's name lightly, in surprise or anger (habitual, not thinking)
- Cursing thoughtlessly
- Using the names of Mary, a Saint, the Pope or other sacred persons irreverently
- Using vulgar or inappropriate language
- Telling bad jokes about sacred persons or objects
- Speaking badly of the Church
- Inappropriate or irreverent use of Scripture

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Doing unnecessary work on Sunday
- Failing to keep Sunday as a day for the family and recreation
- Allowing sports or other schedules to dictate the Sunday schedule
- Being irreverent in church
- Not paying attention or participating at Mass
- Coming late to Mass or leaving early without a serious reason

4. Honor your father and mother.

- Fighting with siblings
- Disobedience to parents or authorities
- Failure to give proper respect to parents or those in authority
- Treating those under one's authority disrespectfully
- Speaking badly about parents / children / one's spouse
- Neglecting duties toward spouse or children
- Failing to give good religious example to one's family
- Making fun of or failing to help the elderly or handicapped
- Failure to teach children adequately about God and the spiritual life
- Lack of gratitude toward parents
- Nagging spouse or children
- Treating adult children like minors
- Meddling in the affairs of married children
- Too lax with rules, boundaries and discipline
- Too strict with rules, boundaries and discipline
- Breaking just civil laws without serious reason
- Being ashamed of or embarrassed about parents

5. You shall not kill.

- Pride, arrogance
- Vanity
- Stubbornness without good reason
- Rudeness
- Failure to apologize
- Fighting or arguing over slight matters
- Anger

- Using obscene or vulgar gestures
- Prejudice
- Harboring a grudge
- Seeking revenge or retaliation
- Wishing evil upon another
- Selfishness
- Listening to bad music
- Excessive watching of television
- Excessive playing of computer games
- Excessive use of the internet
- Watching TV or movies that promote sex or violence
- Playing computer games that promote sex or violence
- Refusing to forgive another
- Intemperance (overeating or drinking too much)
- Driving carelessly
- Failure to care for one's health
- Abusing medications
- Sloth (laziness)
- Procrastination
- Failure to respect the dignity of self or others
- Giving scandal to another
- Treating another unjustly
- Failure to take medications if such are necessary
- Doing things willfully to anger others

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Lack of custody of the eyes (looking inappropriately at others)
- Allowing the heart to stray from one's spouse
- Dressing somewhat immodestly
- Acting or carrying oneself immodestly
- Treating others as objects
- Failure to respect persons of the opposite sex
- Seeking wrongful attention from another
- Selfish in marital intimacy
- Failure to be open to life without serious reason
- Keeping bad company

7. You shall not steal.

- Attachments to persons or things
- Theft of small or inexpensive items
- Willful failure to return borrowed items
- Wasting time
- Failure to pay debts promptly
- Failing to practice charity or to help the poor
- Squandering money on needless things or pursuits
- Not keeping a promise

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

- Lying
- Gossiping
- Spreading rumors or tale bearing
- Talking behind another's back
- Being negative, critical or uncharitable in thought regarding others
- Making rash judgments
- Being unjustly suspicious
- Failure to seek to restore the good name of another whom you have injured through speech
- Cheating in games, school, work, etc.
- Exaggerating the truth
- Bragging or boasting
- Flattery
- Complaining, whining or attention getting

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- Telling or listening to impure or vulgar jokes or stories
- Brief entertainment of impure thoughts or fantasies
- Not trying to control the imagination
- Curiosity or playing with temptation
- Seeking out or looking at persons or pictures which are immodest

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

- Envy (sadness or anger at the good fortune of another)
- Jealousy (desire for the goods of another)
- Greed
- Materialism
- Not trusting that God will provide for all material and spiritual needs
- Attachment to riches or material goods
- Proud and boastful, thinking myself better in the sight of God and despising others as less important than myself
- Imposing my own will on others, without respecting their freedom and rights
- Not using my time and talents to honor and serve God and my neighbor
- Lazy and too much given to leisure