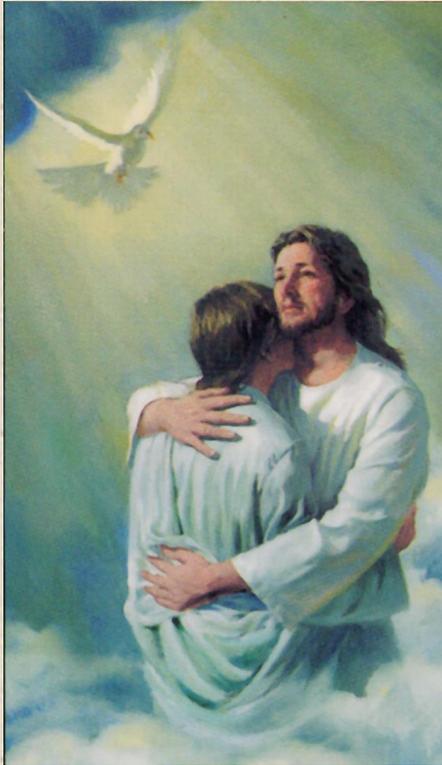


*A Guide for Confession  
for Teenagers*



**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... And these are my sins.**

**Penitent:** (*Confess your sins. At the end you can say: "For these and all the sins of my life, I am sorry."*) *The priest may ask you some questions for clarification. Then he may counsel you on a point or two from your confession.*

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 for Teenagers**

## ***1. You shall not have other gods before Me.***

Have I been slow or reluctant to perform my duties toward God?

Have I neglected to pray every day?

Have I prepared myself properly for Holy Communion?

Have I received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?

Have I neglected to confess a mortal sin in a previous confession, when I was aware of committing one?

Have I practiced superstition or engaged in occult practices, such as consulting horoscopes, tarot cards, or ouija boards?

Have I participated in séances or satanic services and/ or prayers?

Have I refused to accept any teaching of the Church?

Have I put my soul in danger by reading, viewing, or listening to material that attacks the teachings of the Catholic Church in matters of faith or morals?

## ***2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord Your God in vain.***

Have I taken the Holy Name of God in vain or spoken His Name in anger?

Have I jokingly or irreverently spoken about God or about any sacred person, place or thing?

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

Have I failed to attend Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation without just cause (for example, serious illness or impassible roads or pathways)?

Have I deliberately failed to pay attention at Mass?

Have I worn improper attire to Mass, or distracted others from paying attention at Mass?

Am I generous in helping the Church, contributing some of my allowance or savings at collection time to help the Church in her necessities as much as I can?

Do I fast and practice abstinence on the days or at the times which are appointed by the Church?

Have I performed (or required others to perform) unnecessary labor on Sundays (not including acts of mercy or labor as a public servant, hospital worker, caring for farm animals, etc.)?

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

Have I disobeyed my parents, or have I been disrespectful to them?

Have I failed to express my love for my parents?

Do I nurse angry feelings or show resentment when I am corrected by my parents?

Do I faithfully perform, without complaining, the household and outdoor chores my parents give me to do?

#### ***5. You shall not kill.***

Have I lost my temper or become unjustly angry at others?

Have I murdered or otherwise unjustly injured (no matter how slight) anyone?

Have I been a reckless driver?

Have I tempted others to sin by my bad example, immodest dress, or sinful conversation?

Have I encouraged others to read or watch sinful materials or programs or to otherwise do sinful things?

Have I tried to commit suicide?

Have I mutilated myself or someone else?

Have I been drunk or intoxicated on alcohol or other substances?

Have I picked fights with or quarreled with anyone, including my brothers and sisters?

Have I been a bully or maliciously teased or insulted others?

Have I recommended, consented to, advised, or actively taken part in an abortion?

Have I harmed anyone by my speech or actions?

Have I desired to take revenge on anyone who offended me?

Have I hated or nursed bad feelings (resentment) or refused pardon toward any person?

Have I sought pardon of those whom I have offended?

#### ***6. You shall not commit adultery, and (9) You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.***

Have I deliberately recalled or entertained impure thoughts or desires?

Have I been involved in acts which arouse lustful desires (such as necking, petting, passionate kissing, and prolonged embraces)?

Have I had sexual relations with a member of the opposite sex?

Have I engaged in impure conversations?

Have I placed myself in proximate (close) occasions of sin, such as sensual dances; sexually suggestive movies, plays, or reading material; evil company; houses of prostitution; massage parlors; sharing of a room with a member of the opposite sex; being alone with a person with whom I have continually sinned with, or deliberately taken such a person to a secluded place?

Have I neglected to dress modestly or to otherwise safeguard purity?

Have I failed to investigate the sinful potentials of watching a particular show or reading a particular book or magazine?

Have I willfully looked at immodest pictures?

Have I led others to commit the sins of immodesty or impurity?

Have I committed impure acts with myself (masturbation)?

Have I committed impure acts with someone else, either of the opposite sex or the same sex (homosexual acts)?

Have I tended to use this person as an object for my pleasure, rather than a person created in God's image and likeness whom God has placed in my life to respect and reverence?

**7. *You shall not steal, and (10) You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.***

Have I seriously entertained temptations to steal?

Have I stolen anything? What was it worth? Have I returned the stolen item or intend to return it?

Have I refused to seek the owner of property that I have found?

Have I damaged or been responsible for the damage of another person's property?

Have I caused harm to anyone in business dealings by means of fraud, deception, or coercion?

Have I been responsible with the money or other means of wealth which God has entrusted to me?

Have I spent beyond my means?

Have I been envious of the wealth or material goods of another person?

Have I honored my debts?

Have I been lazy with respect to my employment, household chores, work, or studies?

Have I been greedy?

Have I placed too high a value on material goods?

Have I failed to help those whom I know are truly needy?

Have I set my heart primarily on earthly pleasures and possessions, and not on the true treasures of Heaven?

**8. *You shall not lie.***

Have I lied?

Have I sought to make up for the damage caused by my lies?

Have I accused or hastily judged others of wrongdoing without sufficient evidence?

Have I been guilty of detraction (that is, speaking about the faults of others without a good reason for doing so)?

Have I been guilty of calumny (that is, to falsely accuse someone of sinful conduct)?

Have I gossiped about another person?

Have I been excessively critical, negative, and uncharitable in my speech?

Have I failed to honor the confidences or secrets entrusted to me by another? Have I revealed them to someone else without permission or without due or serious cause?

Have I failed to defend the good name or honor of others?