



CREDO

Know your Faith + Love your Faith + Share your Faith

RECEIVE GOD'S HEALING MERCY IN CONFESSION

If you have not celebrated this sacrament in some time, consider these points about how to prepare for it. A sample examination of conscience is on the other side of this page. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in His "Sermon on the Mount" that considering the letter of the law *means considering its deeper meaning too* (cf. Matthew 5:17 - 7:29). Jesus teaches, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This means that His life and love heals the wounds of our sins and helps us to be faithful to His teaching. This makes us "complete" (this is one meaning when translating the word, "perfect"). We are striving to love God wholeheartedly, which helps us to love ourselves and others (cf. Matthew 22:34-40).

- 1. Examine your conscience.** What were those times in which – with your full knowledge and consent – you did not love God by disobeying His commandments? What hinders you from growing in love with God and others?
- 2. Believe that you will encounter God, who loves you, in this sacrament.** Jesus gave us this sacrament on the first Easter Sunday evening (cf. John 20:19-23). What you will confess to the priest is held in strict confidence and will not be held against you. Remember that you are coming to experience God's saving mercy.
- 3. Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Usually a person begins with these words: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been [number of days, months, weeks, years*] since my last confession." You are asking for the grace to confess your sins completely with confidence in God's love for you. (*Giving an approximate period to the best of your ability is sufficient.)
- 4. Confess those sins that you can remember.** Any sins that you have forgotten are forgiven during the Prayer of Absolution too.
- 5. Any explanation of the context should be concise.** You are confessing *your* sins.
- 6. If you are confessing any mortal or grave sins, tell the priest how often they occurred** to the best of your ability.
- 7. The priest may offer some guidance. The priest will give a penance.** It is an expression of your desire to: (1) make amends for your sins, and (2) strive to live in right relationship with God and others. If you do not understand what the priest is asking you to do, do not hesitate to ask him.
- 8. Then you will pray an Act of Contrition.** You can offer a prescribed prayer. Or you can offer a spontaneous prayer which expresses sorrow for sin and your intention to amend your life with the help of God's grace.
- 9. As the priest offers the Prayer of Absolution, receive the healing mercy of God.** Your sins are being forgiven by God through the ministry of the Church. *Rejoice in His saving power. You have been given a fresh start! This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!*
- 10. Do your penance.** Spend time afterwards to thank God for His steadfast love and mercy. As God has been merciful to you, be an instrument of mercy in the lives of other people.

Composed by Father Raymond Harris from various sources.

An Examination of Conscience based on The Ten Commandments

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

- Do I believe that God loves me?
- Do I pray to God every day? Do I engage in other opportunities to cooperate with God to deepen my faith?
- Did I place any person or anything above following Christ within His Church?
- Do I think that everything depends on me without God's help?

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

- Did I respect the name of God in my speech?
- Did I use profanity or engage in cursing?

3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

- Do I worship God during Holy Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation?

Please note: It is not a sin if you have missed Holy Mass due to illness; or taking care of a loved one who is ill; or severe inclement weather like snow or ice prevented you from attending.

- Do I view worship as an obligation to fulfill rather than an opportunity to praise God?
- Did I fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday when healthy to do so? Did I abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent when healthy to do so? (The law of abstinence from meat binds all Catholics 14 years of age and older. The law of fasting binds all adults from age 18 - 60.)

4. Honor your father and mother.

Questions for children

- Do I express gratitude to my parents?
- Did I try to work out any problems with them?
- Did I use affection to attempt to control them?
- Did I respect those in legitimate authority over me?

Questions for parents

- Do I express gratitude to my children?
- Do I strive to provide a good example for them? Do I strive to fulfill the promise that I made during their baptism (i.e., to raise them in the practice of the Faith)?
- Do I use affection to attempt to control them?
- Did I respect those in legitimate authority over me?

5. You shall not kill.

- Do I respect my body as a temple of the Holy Spirit?
- Did I disrespect my body (e.g., illicit drugs, nicotine, overeating, getting drunk, etc.)?
- Did I damage anyone's reputation?
- Did I drive my car or engage in any activity without concern for my safety or others' safety?
- Did I participate in an abortion or help someone to obtain an abortion?
- How have I dealt with anger?
- Have I agreed with racist or prejudicial ideas; said or supported racist or prejudicial words; committed or supported racist or prejudicial actions?
- Have I held on to a desire for revenge against anyone who has offended me, rather than holding out for the possibility being reconciled with them?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

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

Sexuality is a gift from God and should be expressed appropriately according to our state in life.

- Did I engage in sexual intercourse outside of the marriage covenant between a husband and wife?
- Did I treat other people as objects to exploit, whether in sight, thought, word, and/or action?
- Did I indulge in masturbation or pornography?
- Did I use artificial contraception (birth control)?
- Am I faithful to my spouse?

7. You shall not steal.

- Did I steal material or intellectual property?
- Did I cheat on a test or exam?
- Have I wasted food or other things?
- Do I do my part to promote social justice based upon Gospel principles?

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

- Have I lied?
- Have I engaged in calumny (I said something negative about person that was false.)?
- Have I engaged in detraction (I said something negative about person that was true but did not need to be said.)? This is different from asking for advice in dealing with a difficult situation, etc.

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

- Did I complain about what I do not have rather than thanking God for my blessings?
- Am I jealous about other people's good fortune - whether spiritual, intellectual, or material?