

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

"You shall not steal."

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

- Have I been greedy or jealous of things others have? Do I resent their popularity or success? Do I believe that with God, I lack nothing truly essential, or do I think I'll only be happy if I have what someone else has?
- Did I shoplift, steal or take things that didn't belong to me? Did I receive stolen goods? Have I returned or made restitution for things I have stolen?
- Did I damage others' property without owning up to it and repairing it?
- Have I cheated?
- Have I wasted time, goods or food? Have I buried the gifts God has given me out of laziness or lack of appreciation?
- Have I walked by people suffering without thinking what I could do to help? Have I omitted a good deed God was inviting me to do?
- Do I use the money I have responsibly? Do I generously share what I have with the needy?
- Am I generous in supporting the mission of the Church? Do I participate with my time, talents and treasure in the Church's apostolic and charitable works?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

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

- Have I lied?
- Have I kept my promises?
- Did I break a secret or a confidence?
- Have I injured another's reputation by lying about them (calumny) or by revealing true hidden faults about them that third parties didn't need to know (detraction)?
- Have I gossiped or passed on rumors?
- Have I judged others?
- Did I insult or mock others with the intention of hurting them?
- Have I given into the devil's lies about myself or consented to self-hatred?
- Have I tried to gain self-worth out of comparison with others, bringing them down?
- Have I reacted to a situation out of anger rather than taking it to God and discerning the right time and way to speak justly?

OTHER SINS

- Did I intentionally refuse to mention some grave sin in my previous confessions?
- Have I fulfilled my obligation to go to confession at least once a year and of going worthily to Holy Communion at least during the Easter season?
- Did I fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?
- Did I abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent or Ash Wednesday?

Going to Confession

The penitent and the priest begin with the sign of the Cross, saying:
+In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest urges the penitent to have confidence in God with these or similar words:

May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess your sins with true sorrow.

The priest may read or say a passage from Sacred Scripture after which the penitent then states:

Bless/Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (however many days, weeks, months or years) since my last confession. Here are my sins.

The penitent then states his or her sins. For the confession to be valid, the penitent must confess all of the mortal sins he or she is aware of having committed since the last confession, be sorry for them, and have a firm purpose of amendment to try not to commit the same sins in the future.

After this, the priest will generally give some advice to the penitent and impose a penance, which is a way to advance our spiritual healing and seek greater unity with God. Then he will ask the penitent to make an act of contrition. The penitent may do so in his or her own words, or may say one of many memorized acts of contrition like the following:

Act of Contrition

O My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with the help of your grace, to do penance, to sin no more and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us. In His Name, O Lord, have mercy.

After this the priest will absolve the penitent in the following words:

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and poured out 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.

The penitent makes the sign of the Cross and answers:

Amen.

The priest will then dismiss the penitent with a short prayer and encouragement. The penitent should then try to fulfill the penance imposed right away if it is something that can be done then.



Encountering Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation



A Guide for College Students

To Making a Thorough Examination of Conscience and a Good Confession

"God never tires of forgiving us. It's we who tire of asking for forgiveness. May we never tire of asking for what God never tires to give!"

— Pope Francis, March 17, 2013

Preparing for Confession

God awaits you with love in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Jesus told us, "Heaven rejoices more for one repentant sinner than for 99 who never needed to repent." So please know how happy you will make God and all of heaven by coming! As you prepare, ask God the Holy Spirit's help to examine your conscience well by prayerfully reviewing your conduct in light of the commandments and the example of Christ. The questions in this pamphlet can assist you in making a thorough review. Tell the priest the specific kind of sins you have committed and, to the best of your ability, the frequency.

To make a good confession, you need to confess any mortal (gravely serious) sins you have committed. Confession of venial sins, however, is very helpful for avoiding sin and advancing in holiness toward Heaven. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: "Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent" (CCC 1857). If you are in doubt about whether a sin is mortal or venial, please just mention it to the priest.

Remember that God loves you as a beloved son or daughter and has created the Sacrament for us to restore our souls to their baptismal beauty. So please trust in his loving wisdom and do not be afraid. The Lord can forgive any sin, no matter how bad or shameful to us. The point of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is to be restored to a relationship of holiness with the God who loves you. So, as you examine your conscience, focus more on the "God of the commandments" than the "commandments of God." Ask God the Holy Spirit to give you real sorrow out of love for God for the sins you've committed and a deep resolve, out of that sorrow, to try never to commit these sins again.

Examination of Conscience

Catholics for centuries have found it profitable to examine their consciences in light of the Ten Commandments, which teach us how to love God (1-3) and to love neighbor (4-10). Penitents are encouraged to expand on them in their prayerful review of their conduct.

FIRST COMMANDMENT

"I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before Me."

- Have I really loved God above all things or have I made other things — money, clothes, sports, TV, music, pleasure, peer approval — or people more important than God?
- Have I made time for God each day in prayer? Do I pray only when I need something or do I also seek to praise and thank Him, too?
- Have I fallen into despair, losing hope in who God is and His goodness? Have I fled from God after sinning, rather than receiving His Mercy?
- Have I made a serious effort to get to know my faith well, since my relationship with God is supposed to be the most important thing in my life?
- Have I endangered my faith by superstitious practices, like witchcraft, wicca, ouija boards, fortune tellers, or dependence on horoscopes?
- Have I given into excesses (food, booze, drugs, media and social media) looking for God in finite things?
- Do I accept and follow God's teaching or do I pick and choose only the parts of His message that please me?

- Have I denied my faith before others? Have I been willing to affirm, defend and practice my faith before others?
- Have I made my work or myself an idol? Have I relied on myself rather than on God? Have I allowed my worries to take the place of trust in God?
- Have I not been open to asking God what He desires for me?
- Do I believe or behave as if one religion is just as good as another?

SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain."

- Do I love and have reverence for God's Name? Have I used God's name carelessly, in anger, frustration or surprise?
- Have I called down evil on anyone?
- Do I try my best to fulfill the promises and resolutions that I have made toward God, especially those of my Baptism and Confirmation?
- Have I shown disrespect for the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, the Church and those who have consecrated their lives to God?
- Have I used foul and vulgar language?

THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day."

- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation through my own fault?
- Have I prayed and paid attention during Holy Mass or have I just gone through the motions? Do I participate by singing and praying the responses, or do I behave like a spectator wanting to be entertained? Do I focus on the Word of God and try to apply it to my life?
- Have I arrived at Mass late due to carelessness or left early without a serious reason?
- Have I kept the Eucharistic fast before Holy Mass?
- Did I do work on Sunday that was not necessary? Have I used Sunday just as part of the "weekend" or as a day for acts of love toward God, my family and those in need?
- Have I received Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin (like, for example, voluntarily missing Sunday Mass and receiving the next Mass without first going to Confession)?

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor your father and your mother."

- Have I failed to be grateful and to thank my parents for the sacrifices they have made for me?
- Have I disrespected my family members or those in authority by treating them poorly, insulting, ridiculing or yelling at them?
- Do I try to bring happiness and peace to my family or do I cause tension and division?
- When home, do I offer to help out or do I behave as if I'm there to be served?
- Do I make time to call or visit my elderly relatives and those in poor health?

- Have I been a loyal, trustworthy and committed sibling and friend?
- Have I refused to forgive family members for the ways any of them have hurt me?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not kill."

- Have I physically harmed someone or tried to do so? Have I been violent in my words or actions?
- Have I done drugs, allowed myself to become intoxicated or done other things that will damage my health? Have I sold or distributed drugs?
- I intentionally cut or harmed my body, attempt suicide or entertain thoughts of taking my life?
- Did I have an abortion, or encourage or assist someone else to have one?
- Do I get angry easily and lose my temper? Do I act rudely, impolitely or arrogantly? Have I put others down to feel better about myself?
- Have I held grudges or tried to get even with others? Have I hated or failed to forgive someone? Have I looked at someone with a judgmental gaze that "killed" their dignity, rather than viewed them with the mercy and love of God?
- Have I caused another to sin through my words or example?
- Have I harmed animals, littered or been destructive to the environment?

SIXTH & NINTH COMMANDMENTS

"You shall not commit adultery."

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

- Have I remained chaste and pure in mind and body, as God requires of me? Do I understand and appreciate the gift of my sexuality and, regardless of the past, intend now to save the gift of myself for marriage?
- Do I have a reverence for the institution of marriage as God made it, a union by God of one man and one woman?
- Do I treat my whole person as a temple of the Holy Spirit whom God loves? Have I neglected taking proper care of my body — eating well, sleeping enough, exercising within good measure?
- Did I deliberately look at pornographic TV programs, computer sites, videos, pictures, movies or videogames?
- Did I commit impure acts with myself (masturbation) or with others through adultery (sex with a married person), fornication (premarital sex) or homosexual activity?
- Have I used people merely as instruments to my ends rather than treating them as the image of God?
- Have I fondled or kissed another person lustfully? Have I treated others, in my deeds or thoughts, as objects?
- Have I been an occasion of sin for others by acting or dressing immodestly?