



*Examination of  
Conscience  
and  
Making a Thorough  
Confession*

If sin is like lowering your shield, a good confession raises it back up. There are many ways to do an examination of conscience in preparation for a good Confession. Your parish priest will also be able to walk you through it, especially if you have not been to Confession for many years. Father Ripperger has created the following checklist for preparing for sacramental Confession, which follows the Ten Commandments and the Five Precepts of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This list is compiled from Ripperger, *Laity*, 112-21. Used with permission. See also, Liber Christo, “Companion Guide,” 90-105.

***First Commandment: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shall not have strange gods before me.***

**Sins contrary to the First Commandment include the following:**

- Neglect of prayer
- Ingratitude toward God
- Spiritual sloth (having no interest in prayer, sacraments, living a spiritual life)
- Hatred of God or of the Catholic Church/Christianity
- Tempting God (explicitly or implicitly, e.g., by exposing oneself to danger of soul, life, or health without grave cause)
- Not behaving reverently when in church (e.g., not genuflecting to the Blessed Sacrament when entering or leaving the church, etc.)
- Excessive attraction to things/creatures as more important than God (e.g., over-affection to animals, being a sports-fanatic, having movie star /music/tv idols, love for money, pleasure or power)
- Idolatry (worshiping false gods such as giving honor to a creature in place of God (e.g., Satan, science, ancestors, country)
- Superstition (ascribing powers to a created thing which it does not have)
- Hypnotism
- Divination (communication with Satan, demons, the dead or other false practices in order to discover the unknown; to wit, consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, fortune telling)
- Attaching undue importance to dreams, omens or lots
- All practices of magic or sorcery (e.g., witchcraft, voodoo)
- Wearing charms or other occult items
- Playing with Ouija boards or rotating tables
- Spiritism (talking with the spirits)
- Sacrilege (profaning or treating unworthily the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, and other liturgical actions, as well as religious persons, blessed things such as sacred vessels or statues, or places consecrated to God)
- Sacrilege by receiving a sacrament, especially the Holy Eucharist, in the state of mortal sin
- Simony (buying or selling of spiritual things)
- Profane or superstitious use of blessed objects
- Practical materialism (desiring only material things); atheistic humanism (falsely considering man to be an end in himself, and the sole maker with supreme control of his own history/destiny)
- Atheism in general (reject, deny or doubt the existence of God, either in theory or practice, i.e., ignoring God in the daily living of one's life)
- Agnosticism (belief in the existence of a transcendent being which is incapable of revealing itself, and about which nothing can be said or known, i.e., holding that no judgment about God's existence is knowable and, thus, declaring it impossible to prove or even to affirm or deny God's existence)

## *Theological Virtues*

**Sins contrary to the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, Charity include the following:**

### **Sins against Faith:**

- Willful doubt of any article of faith
- Deliberate ignorance of the truths of faith which ought to be known
- Neglect of instructing oneself in the faith according to one's state in life
- Rash credulity (e.g., giving credence to private revelation too easily or believing in a private revelation which has been condemned by lawful Church authority)
- Apostasy (renouncing or abandoning the faith)
- Heresy
- Indifferentism (to believe that one religion is as good as another, and that all religions are equally true and pleasing to God, or that one is free to accept or reject any or all religions)
- Reading or circulating books or writings against the Catholic belief or practice so as to jeopardize one's own faith or that of another
- To remain silent when asked about one's faith
- Engaging in schismatic or heretical worship
- Joining or supporting masonic groups or other forbidden societies

### **Sins against Hope:**

- Despair of God's mercy (to give up all hope of salvation and the means necessary to be saved); or the lack of confidence in the power of God's grace to support us in trouble or temptation
- A lack of desire to possess eternal happiness in heaven after this earthly life
- Presumption (to hope for salvation without help from God, or to assume God's forgiveness without conversion; to hope to obtain heavenly glory without merit)
- Presuming on God's mercy or on the supposed efficacy of certain pious practices, in order to continue in sin
- Refusing any dependence on God

### **Sins against Charity:**

- Not making an act of charity at regular intervals during life, especially during times of necessity
- Egoism (caring only about oneself, love of self/self-praise, selfish, enjoy receiving praise)
- Willfully rebellious thoughts against God
- Boasting of sin
- Violating God's law, or omitting good works out of human respect

***Second Commandment: Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.***

**Sins contrary to the Second Commandment include the following:**

- Dishonoring of God by profane or disrespectful use of the Holy Name of God, the blasphemous use of the name of Jesus Christ, or the names of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints
- Blasphemy (speech or gestures that have contempt for or express insult to God, Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the saints)
- Perjury (to promise something under oath with no intention of keeping it, or breaking a promise made under oath)
- Taking false or unnecessary oaths (to call on God to be witness to a lie); breaking vows or promises to God
- Talking during Mass and in a Church without sufficient reason or to the distraction of others

***Third Commandment: Remember that thou shall keep holy the Lord's Day.***

**Sins contrary to the Third Commandment:**

- Omission of prayer and divine worship (not attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation)
- Unnecessary servile work on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligations
- Activities that hinder the keeping of the Lord's Day holy (engaging in unnecessary commerce, i.e., buying and selling on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation)

***Fourth Commandment: Honor thy father and mother.***

**For Parents and their relationship with their children:**

- Hating their children
- Cursing one's children
- Giving scandal by cursing, drinking, etc.
- Allowing them to grow up in ignorance, idleness or sin
- Showing habitual partiality without cause
- Deferring a child's baptism
- Neglecting to watch over their bodily health, their religious instruction, the company they keep, the books they read, etc.
- Failing to correct them when needful
- Being harsh or cruel in correction
- Sending children to Protestant and other dangerous schools
- Neglect of taking/directing them to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days and to practice frequent reception of the sacraments

**For children and their relationship with parents:**

- All manner of anger or hatred against parents and other lawful superiors
- Provoking one's parents to anger; grieving them; insulting them; neglecting them in their necessity; contempt or disobedience to their lawful commands
- Disobedience or disrespect to parents

**Husbands and wives:**

- Ill-usage (i.e., using them without consideration for their own welfare and without regard to charity)

- Putting obstacles to the fulfilment of religious duties
- Want of gentleness and consideration in regard to each other's faults
- Unreasonable jealousy
- Neglect of household duties
- Sulking, brooding over injury
- Injurious words
- Neglect of attempting to secure means of supporting the family due to laziness or timidity

#### **For employers:**

- Not allowing one's employees reasonable time for religious duties and instruction
- Giving bad example to them or allowing others to do so
- Withholding their lawful wages
- Not caring for them in sickness
- Dismissing them arbitrarily and without cause
- Imposing unreasonable policies

#### **For employees:**

- Disrespect to employers
- Lack of obedience in matters wherein one has bound oneself to obey (e.g., by fulfilling a contract); waste of time; neglect of work
- Waste of employer's property by dishonesty, carelessness, or neglect
- Violating company policies without sufficient reason

#### **For professionals and civil servants:**

- Culpable lack of knowledge relating to the duties of office or profession
- Neglect in discharging those duties
- Injustice or partiality
- Exorbitant fees (this sin may also be included under the Seventh Commandment)

#### **For teachers:**

- Neglecting the progress of those confided to their care
- Unjust, indiscreet, or excessive punishment
- Partiality
- Bad example
- Loose or false maxims (i.e., teaching them things which are untrue as being true)

#### **Students:**

- Disrespect
- Disobedience
- Stubbornness
- Idleness
- Wasting of time
- Giving in to idle distractions (e.g., partying and undue recreation)

#### **For all:**

- Contempt for the laws of state and country as well as of the Church
- Disobedience to lawful authority
- Not abiding by civil laws when there is no just cause to do so

## ***Fifth Commandment: Thou shall not kill.***

### **Sins contrary to the Fifth Commandment include the following:**

- Murder
- Performing an abortion
- Having an abortion
- Aiding in someone procuring an abortion (having or aiding in an abortion causes one to be excommunicated)
- Euthanasia
- Withholding ordinary means to a dying or terminally ill patient
- Suicide
- Attempts of suicide
- Serious thoughts about committing suicide
- Fighting, quarreling
- Anger, hatred
- Desires of revenge
- Human torture
- Gluttony (excessive eating or drinking)
- Drunkenness
- Abuse of alcohol, medicine, or drugs
- Endangering another's life (e.g., by drinking and driving, by driving too fast, etc.)
- Risking one's own life or limb without a sufficient reason (e.g., daredevil stunts, Russian roulette, etc.)
- Carelessness in leaving about poisons, dangerous drugs, weapons, etc.
- Mutilation of the body, such as castration or hysterectomy when organs are not diseased
- Tattooing of the body (images that are Satanic or contrary to Christian faith, with ink that has had spells placed on it, excessive tattooing)
- Immoral scientific research and its applications
- Bad example or scandal; inducing others to sin by word or example
- Disrespect for the dying or the dead
- Showing aversion or contempt for others
- Refusing to speak to others when addressed
- Ignoring offers of reconciliation, especially between relatives
- Cherishing/harboring an unforgiving spirit
- Raillery and ridicule
- Insults, irritating words and actions
- Sadness at another's prosperity
- Rejoicing over another's misfortune
- Envy at attention shown to others
- Tyrannical behavior
- Injury to health by over-indulgence
- Giving drink to others knowing they will abuse it
- Taking contraceptive pills which may or may not be abortifacient
- Use of prophylactic or barrier methods to avoid pregnancy
- Using licit means of avoiding conception while fostering a contraceptive mentality
- Direct sterilization (vasectomy, tubal ligation)
- Causing unnecessary suffering or death to animals
- In-vitro fertilization or other artificial means of conceiving a child (donating sperm/ova; manual insemination; surrogate motherhood; etc.)

***Sixth Commandment: Thou shall not commit adultery.***

**Sins contrary to the Sixth Commandment include the following:**

- Impurity and immodesty in words, looks (deliberately not practicing custody of the eyes), and gestures/actions, whether alone or with others
- Telling and listening to dirty jokes
- Deliberate vulgar, impure language
- Wearing immodest clothing
- Buying, renting or watching indecent movies, television or books
- Pornography, as well as books which contain descriptions of impurity (e.g., “romance” novels that are descriptive of sexual acts)
- Masturbation
- Fornication (sometimes called premarital sex)
- Marriage outside of the Catholic Church of a baptized Catholic such as before a civil official or non-Catholic minister, and the sexual relations that take place in this invalid union
- Prostitution
- Homosexual sodomy and other homosexual practices
- Heterosexual sodomy
- Adultery
- Swinging/spouse-swapping; adultery with consent of spouse
- Divorce
- Polygamy
- Incest
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual abuse
- Rape
- Prolonged and sensual kissing between persons who are not spouses
- Petting or foreplay outside the context of marriage
- Petting or foreplay within the context of marriage whereby foreplay does not end up in the consummation of the natural conjugal act
- Immodest dancing
- Dating without taking the necessary precautions to safeguard purity or one’s faith
- Unnatural sexual act (such as with an animal, object, etc.)



### ***Seventh Commandment: Thou shall not steal.***

#### **Sins contrary to the seventh commandment include the following:**

- Stealing
- Petty thefts (e.g., taking things from one's employer or family member to which one is not entitled and without permission)
- Cheating
- Plagiarizing
- Breaking copyright regulations, (e.g., photocopying without permission)
- Keeping borrowed or lost objects without making a reasonable attempt to restore the other's property
- Possession of ill-gotten goods
- Counseling or commanding someone to do injury to another person or to his goods
- Careless or malicious injury to the property of others
- Concealment of fraud, theft or damage when in duty bound to give the information
- Tax evasion by not paying just taxes
- Business fraud
- Dishonesty in politics, business, etc.
- Not paying just debts at scheduled time and neglecting to make reasonable efforts and sacrifices in this matter, e.g., by gradually laying up the amount required
- Not making reparation or compensation to someone suffering from unjust damages
- Forcing up prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another
- Usury (lending money at high interest rates to someone in financial difficulty)
- Speculation in which one contrives to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others
- Corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must decide in legal matters
- Accepting bribes
- Appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an enterprise; work poorly done
- Paying unjust wages or depriving an employee of due benefits
- Forgery of checks and invoices
- Writing checks knowing that there are not enough funds to cover them
- Excessive expenses and waste
- Not keeping promises or contractual agreements (if the commitments were morally just)
- Gambling and betting (if they deprive someone of basic living needs for himself or others)
- Excessive and unnecessary waste of goods, resources, money, or funds

***Eighth Commandment: Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.***

**Sins contrary to the eighth commandment include the following:**

- Lying
- Boasting or bragging
- Flattery
- Hypocrisy
- Exaggerating
- Sarcasm
- Unjust injury to another's good name either by revealing true and hidden faults (detraction), or by telling false defects (slander or calumny)
- Tale-bearing, spreading rumors, or gossip
- Criticizing others
- To listen with pleasure to others being criticized
- Unjustly dishonoring another person in his presence (contumely)
- Rash judgment (firmly believing, without sufficient reason, that someone has some moral defect)
- Revealing secrets
- Publishing discreditable secrets about others, even if true
- Refusing or delaying to restore the good name one has blackened
- Baseless accusations
- Groundless suspicions

### ***Ninth Commandment: Thou shall not covet they neighbor's wife.***

The Ninth Commandment forbids all impure thoughts and desires that we take deliberate pleasure in so thinking, or to which we willingly consent whenever these unchaste thoughts or passions come into our mind. The penitent should keep in mind that any sin listed under the sixth commandment, in which one willing or deliberately entertains the desire, may have the same degree of gravity (i.e., either mortal or venial sin). In other words, this commandment refers to any deliberate impure thoughts: any deliberate desiring, undue thinking about, or mentally consenting to any of the sins against the Sixth Commandment. If consent is not given to these thoughts, then, these thoughts are temptations. Our effectiveness in spiritual battle is dependent on our purity of thought, word and deed. Therefore, **sins against this Commandment include** the deliberate thinking or fantasizing about:

- Thoughts of vulgar, impure language
- Attention to those wearing immodest clothing
- Recalling (fantasizing about) what one has seen in watching indecent movies or television or in reading impure books
- Recalling (fantasizing about) what one has seen in pornography, as well as what one has read in books which contain descriptions of impurity (e.g., “romance” novels that are descriptive of sexual acts)
- Thinking about/fantasizing about masturbation
- Thinking about/fantasizing about fornication (sometimes called premarital sex)
- Thinking about/fantasizing about prostitution
- Thinking about/fantasizing about heterosexual sodomy
- Thinking about/fantasizing about adultery (“committing adultery in one’s heart”)
- Thinking about/fantasizing about incest
- Thinking about/fantasizing about sexual harassment
- Thinking about/fantasizing about sexual abuse
- Thinking about/fantasizing about rape
- Thinking about/fantasizing about prolonged and sensual kissing between persons who are not spouses
- Thinking about/fantasizing about petting or foreplay outside the context of marriage
- Thinking about/fantasizing about petting or foreplay within the context of marriage whereby foreplay does not end up in the consummation of the natural conjugal act
- Deliberate thinking about/fantasizing about immodest dancing

### ***Tenth Commandment: Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's goods.***

**Sins contrary to the Tenth Commandment include the following:**

- Envy (desire of another’s goods)
- Jealousy (a zealous vigilance in keeping a good enjoyed by oneself from others)
- Greed and the desire to have material goods without limit (avarice)
- The desire to become rich at all costs
- Businesses or professions which hope for unfavorable circumstances for others so that they may personally profit from it
- Envious of someone else’s success, talents, temporal or spiritual goods
- The desire to commit injustice by harming someone in order to get his temporal goods

## *Five Precepts of the Church*

Many Catholics are ignorant of the fact that attending Sunday Mass is an obligation and that to miss Sunday Mass (“unless excused for a serious reason . . . or dispensed by their own pastor” as per CCC 2181 and Canon 1245) is a mortal sin. Other areas of examination of conscience for Confession include whether you have violated this or any of the **Five Precepts of the Church**. As the Catechism states:

The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor (CCC 2041).

The following five precepts are found in the Catechism (CCC 2042-2043):

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor. In addition to Sunday, the days to be observed as holy days of obligation are as follows:<sup>2</sup>
  - January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
  - Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter, the solemnity of the Ascension
  - August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
  - November 1, the solemnity of All Saints
  - December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
  - December 25, the solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.<sup>3</sup>
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.<sup>4</sup>
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.<sup>5</sup>
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

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<sup>2</sup> Holy Days of Obligation may vary slightly depending on diocesan regulations, as determined by the USCCB or the local ordinary in conformity with Canon 1246, para. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Confession once a year is the bare minimum. We recommend that anyone who is in the process of deliverance should go to Confession weekly.

<sup>4</sup> This also is a minimum. Attending daily Mass greatly helps in growing in sanctity and liberation.

<sup>5</sup> Abstaining from meat on Fridays throughout the year is highly recommended. The Church allows other substitutions so long as some form of fasting takes place on Fridays.