

A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

(take this with you ... it's really okay)



BEFORE YOU GO

Examine your conscience, that is, reflect on what sins you've committed. To guide you, just Google "examination of conscience" and you'll find resources to help you. It's even all right to make a list to bring with you if that helps.



INTRODUCTION

When you come before the priest, begin by making the Sign of the Cross (praying the words out loud), and continue by saying, "Bless me, Father, I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession. These are my sins..."



CONFESSION

List the sins you've committed that came to mind during your examination of conscience. Don't be too general ("I haven't been a good person"), but a lot of detail isn't necessary (you don't need to tell the whole story of how a sin came about). If you're not sure if something is a sin, ask the priest. This isn't counseling, so unless you ask, the priest likely won't give you advice. He'll just move on to ...



PENANCE

The priest will suggest something for you to do or pray as a response to God's mercy. You'll have to remember what this is and do it after the confession is over, so pay attention.



ACT OF CONTRITION

The priest will then ask you to pray out loud your "Act of Contrition," to demonstrate your sorrow for your sins: "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 your help, 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, my God, have mercy."



ABSOLUTION

Don't get up to leave after that prayer, because the best part is yet to come: The priest will extend his hands in your direction and he will pray 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. Amen." You respond: "Amen."



CONCLUSION

The priest will then likely say something like, "God has freed you from your sin. Go in Peace." To which you can respond: "Thanks be to God." Don't forget to do your penance. If it is saying certain prayers, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.

Guide for Examination of Conscience for Confession

1st Commandment - "*I am the Lord your God. You shall not have false gods before Me.*" (Ex 20:2,3) Did I doubt or deny that God exists? Did I give time to God each day in prayer? Did I love God with my whole heart? Did I despair of or presume on God's mercy? Did I have false gods in my life that I gave greater attention to than God, like money, profession, drugs, TV, fame, pleasure, property, etc.? Did I believe in fortune telling, horoscopes, the occult, tarot cards, palmistry, Ouija boards, seances, reincarnation?

2nd Commandment - "*You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.*" (Ex 20:7) Did I blaspheme or insult God? Did I take God's name carelessly or uselessly? Did I curse, or break an oath or vow?

3rd Commandment - "*Keep holy the Sabbath Day.*" (Ex 20:8) Did I miss Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation through my own fault? Did I do work on Sunday that was not necessary? Did I set aside Sunday as a day of rest for my family? Did I fulfill my responsibilities during Lent (Fasting and Abstinence)? Did I go to Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin?

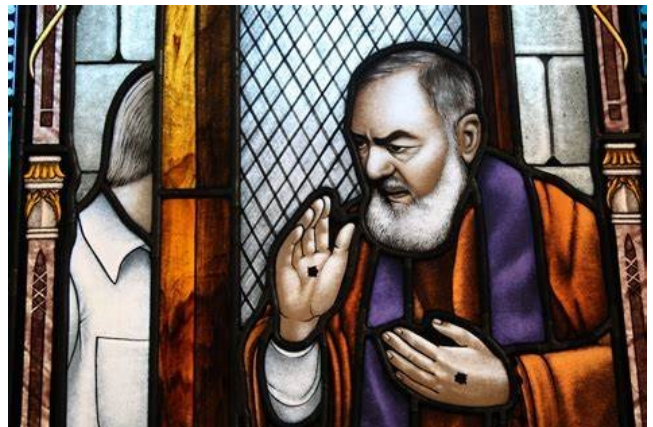
4th Commandment - "*Honor your father and mother.*" (Ex 20:12) Did I disobey or disrespect my parents or legitimate superiors? Did I neglect my duties to my husband, wife, children or parents? Did I neglect to give good religious example to my family? Did I fail to actively take an interest in the religious education and formation of my children? Did I care for my aged and infirm relatives? Did I give a full day's work for a full day's pay? Did I give a fair wage to my employees?

5th Commandment - "*You shall not kill.*" (Ex 20:13) Did I kill or physically injure anyone? Did I abuse anyone? Did I have an abortion, or advise someone else to have an abortion? Did I attempt suicide? Did I take part in or approve of "mercy killing" (euthanasia)? Did I get angry, impatient, envious, or jealous? Was I unkind, proud, revengeful, hateful toward another, lazy? Did I give bad example by drug abuse, drinking alcohol to excess, fighting, quarreling?

6th & 9th Commandments - "*You shall not commit adultery.*" (Ex 20:14) "*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.*" (Ex 20:17) Did I respect all people, or have I thought of or treated others as objects? Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or desires? Did I use impure/suggestive words? Tell impure stories? Listen to them? Did I deliberately look at pornography or other impure images? Did I commit adultery, fornication or masturbation?

7th & 8th Commandments - "*You shall not steal.*" (Ex 20:15) "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*" (Ex 20:16) Did I steal, cheat, help or encourage others to steal or keep stolen goods? Have I made restitution for anything that I stole? Did I fulfill my contracts; give or accept bribes; rashly gamble; deprive my family of the necessities of life? Did I waste time at work, school or at home? Did I lie? Did I deliberately deceive others, or injure others by lies? Did I commit perjury? Did I gossip or reveal others' faults or sins? Did I fail to keep secret what should be confidential?

10th Commandment - "*You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.*" (Ex 20:17) Was I envious or jealous of other people's families or possessions? Did I make material possessions the purpose of my life? Am I thankful for what I have? Am I greedy or selfish?



Stained glass window of Saint Padre Pio located in the chapel of the Phoenix Diocesan Pastoral Center. Saint Pio (1887-1968) was an Italian Capuchin friar and well-known confessor who often spent many hours each day hearing confessions.