

# Confession Guide

## for Middle School-Age Youth



*“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10).*

### Why go to confession?

Jesus gave us the sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) when he breathed on the Apostles saying, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (Jn 20:22-23). With these words, Jesus entrusted his chosen disciples with a share in his own ministry of forgiving sins. This power to forgive sins has been passed on to the priests of our own time through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

### How do I make a good confession?

**Contrition** is necessary for a good confession. Contrition means being sorry for our sins. Being truly sorry, though, is not about feelings; it is instead a *choice* we make. Contrition means making the choice to turn away from the sins of our past while also intending to avoid them in the future. To know our sins, it’s important to **examine our conscience** before confession (see page 2). During confession, we should state our sins humbly and honestly while avoiding any unnecessary details.

### What do I need to confess?

There are two types of sins: mortal sins and venial sins. *Mortal sins* are sins serious enough to break our relationship with God. *Venial sins* are less serious sins that hurt our relationship with God, but without breaking it. **Mortal sins are always required to be confessed.** Even though venial sins are not strictly required to be confessed, doing so helps us to grow closer to God.

### When is a sin mortal?

For a sin to be mortal it must meet three conditions. First, it must be something **serious**. Second, the one doing it must **fully know** it is something serious. And third, it must be freely chosen with **deliberate consent**. As children become teenagers, temptations to mortal sin begin to become more common. One example of something serious enough that it could be a mortal sin is doing drugs.

### Will the priest tell my sins to anyone?

The priest is **never** allowed to tell your sins, even if he has to go to jail for it.

### Should I be nervous?

It’s okay if you are nervous, but there is no need to be. Confession is about receiving God’s mercy and being freed from the sins weighing us down.

# Examination of Conscience

*Ask yourself these questions to prepare for confession.*

**I. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.** *Have I...*

- Intentionally held back a mortal sin or lied in confession?
- Put other things ahead of God in my life? (Friends, popularity, sports, school, video games, money, etc.)
- Stopped believing in God or denied my Catholic faith?
- Not prayed every day? Only prayed when I needed something?
- Taken God's forgiveness for granted? Believed my sins are too great for God's mercy?
- Practiced or put faith in things incompatible with Christianity? (Horoscopes, Ouija boards, good luck charms, etc.)
- Hung around friends who lead me away from God?
- Watched movies/TV shows or listened to music harmful to my relationship with God?

**II. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.** *Have I...*

- Used the name of God or Jesus disrespectfully?
- Made jokes that disrespect God, the Church, or the Catholic faith?

**III. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S Day.** *Have I...*

- Missed Mass on Sunday or holy days of obligation? If so, have I asked my family to take me?
- Showed proper reverence during Mass? Chewed gum or eaten food during Mass? Dressed appropriately for Mass?
- Kept the one-hour fast before receiving Holy Communion?
- Let unnecessary work get in the way of Sunday being a day for faith, rest, and family?

**IV. Honor your father and your mother.** *Have I...*

- Obeyed my parents/guardians? Done something they wouldn't approve of?
- Not showed my parents respect? Yelled, spoken rudely, or talked back to them?
- Obeyed my teachers and those in rightful authority?

**V. You shall not kill.** *Have I...*

- Hurt, bullied, or been cruel to another?
- Lost my temper?

- Dwelled on thoughts of hatred? Sought revenge?
- Refused forgiveness to anyone? Held grudges?
- Not treated all people with respect, even those different from me?
- Used drugs or alcohol? Smoked or vaped?
- Hurt myself on purpose?
- Encouraged another to do something sinful?

VI. **You shall not commit adultery.** *Have I...*

- Not treated my body or another's body with purity and respect?
- Looked at inappropriate pictures or videos on purpose?

VII. **You shall not steal.** *Have I...*

- Stolen, damaged, or vandalized another's property?
- Wasted too much money on electronics or clothing?
- Wasted too much time on video games, TV, or the internet?

VIII. **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.** *Have I...*

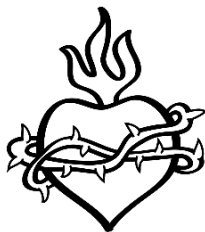
- Lied? Cheated?
- Judged another?
- Spread a false rumor?
- Gossiped about another's negative qualities?
- Shared secrets that I shouldn't have?
- Insulted another? Bragged?
- Failed to stand up for someone when I should have?

IX. **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.** *Have I...*

- Worn clothes that are immodest, revealing, or too tight?
- Been too concerned about my appearance?

X. **You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.** *Have I...*

- Been envious (jealous) of another's gifts, looks, or possessions?
- Cared too much about my popularity?
- Cared too little about those usually left out?



# How to go to Confession

*After you enter the confessional, begin with the Sign of the Cross saying,*  
**“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”**

*The priest may say aloud a prayer or a selection of scripture.*

*You say,*

**“Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been \_\_\_\_\_ (number of weeks/months/years) since my last confession. These are my sins...”**

*Confess your sins. Include the number of times you committed each sin or at least its general frequency (e.g., about 3 times per week). For mortal sins, number or frequency is always required.*

*When finished say,*

**“For these and all the sins of my past life, I am sorry.”**

*The priest gives you a penance and invites you to say an Act of Contrition:*

## An Act of Contrition

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.**

*The priest says the prayer of absolution. Listen especially for the words, “I absolve you from your sins.”*

*(If the priest says, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,” you respond, “His mercy endures forever.”)*

*The priest concludes, “...Go in peace.” You respond,*

**“Thanks be to God.”**

---

**Nihil Obstat:**

Rev. George Welzbacher, Censor librorum

**Imprimatur:**

+ Bernard A. Hebda

Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, September 2020

©2020