

Examination of Conscience for an Adult

Before we approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let us examine our consciences based on the Ten Commandments, and review how faithful we have been to following God's laws in our daily lives.

1. Have I put other things before God, or have I made something an idol in my life? Am I preoccupied about achieving something that is not in God's plan? Have I prayed that God's will be done in my life, so that I might find the peace and true happiness which the world will not—and cannot—give? Have I treated my mind, body, and soul with respect by avoiding addictions? Do I suffer from an addiction to alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling, or pornography? Do I foster a relationship with God with regular prayer?

2. Have I respected the Lord's name? Have I used His name casually? Do I swear? Do I curse?

3. Have I respected the Sabbath, and have I accepted the responsibility of attending Mass regularly? Do I understand the purpose of Sunday Mass and why it is important for my soul to be nourished each week with God's Word & the Eucharist? Do I find time to rest? Am I a workaholic?

4. Do I show honor and respect to my parents? Do I make time for them? Do I understand that they have my best interest at heart, even when it seems that they limit my freedom? Am I a good parent to my children, or do I put other things before them?

5. Have I killed someone or something without a moral purpose? Have I brought an end to innocent life or have I pressured someone else to do so? Have I supported public policies which do not safeguard the dignity of life? Have I truly respected laws that protect the wildlife population and the environment? Do I litter? Do I support companies which give just wages and safe working conditions to their employees, and refrain from doing business with those that do not? Have I been a good steward of creation, and help to minimize my impact on the world and its resources?

6. Have I committed impure acts with myself or with another person? Do I dress appropriately, or do I cause others to sin by my immodesty? Have I viewed or treated another as an object, instead of seeing them as a person who has dignity? Have I been faithful to my spouse? Do I practice chastity according to my current vocation in life? Do I have good esteem, and see the value of saving sexual expression until someone is willing to make a permanent commitment to me via marriage? Do I withhold the life-giving dimension from sexual expression by using artificial contraception?

7. Have I stolen something from another person, from a store, from my employer, or from the common good of others in general?

8. Have I spoken falsely of another person? Have I started rumors about someone else, or participated in gossip? Have I been honest in my words and with my deeds? Have I betrayed another person's trust? Am I as honest as possible when paying taxes and in taking the appropriate deductions according to my marital status or career?

9. Have I harbored anger or jealousy towards another person because they have more possessions? Have I coveted my neighbor's possessions or spouse? Do I treat others differently because of race or background? Do I see myself as being more important than others? Have I failed to help those in need? Have I sinned by omission, out of laziness or fear of embarrassment? Do I value the gifts and talents that God has given specifically to me?

10. Do I have a good attitude, and do I genuinely strive to be the best that I can be? Do I radiate the love and joy of Christ to others? Am I genuine and authentic? Are my motives and actions one and the same? In general, am I a good disciple of the Lord?

The Act of Contrition

O my God, I am truly sorry for having offended you,
and I detest all my sins because of your just punishment.
But most of all, they offend you, my God,
who are all good and deserving of all of my love.
I firmly resolve now, with the help of your grace,
to sin no more, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

Tips for a Good Confession

1. Make a good examination of conscience beforehand. It is perfectly okay to make notes or circle items on your examination of conscience, and if necessary, to bring it with you when you come to confession. Do whatever makes you feel the most confident and comfortable.
2. Focus on your actions before God. Remember, confession is about our sins, and not everyone else's sins. Stories or explanations are not necessary to illustrate how our sins were committed. They usually make us point the finger at someone else, instead of ourselves. Meanwhile, they make people wait longer in line behind us. If the priest is confused, he will ask a clarifying question.
3. Don't worry about remembering the Act of Contrition. You may take a copy in with you or the priest will help you make an act of contrition.
4. Remember that all priests want you to have a good experience of this sacrament. While priests realize that it's natural for you to be nervous, overwhelming anxiety often hinders a good confession. Focus on God's grace and mercy, and do not allow it to be stifled by nervousness. The priests are here to help you!

Communal Penance

Please offer the following prayer after your confession, with a true spirit of thanksgiving:

My good and dear Jesus, I kneel before you, asking you most earnestly to engrave upon my heart a deep and lively faith, hope, and charity, with true repentance for my sins, and a firm resolve to make amends.

As I reflect upon your five wounds, and dwell upon them with deep compassion and grief, I recall, good Jesus, the words the prophet David spoke long ago concerning yourself: "They have pierced my hands and my feet, they have counted all my bones!"

Lord Jesus Christ, take all my freedom, my memory, my understanding, and my will. All that I have and cherish you have given me. I surrender it all to be guided by your will. Your grace and your love are wealth enough for me. Give me these, Lord Jesus, and I ask for nothing more. Amen.

An Examination of Conscience for a Child

1. Have I used God's name in an unkind way or have I used curse words?
2. Have I missed Mass on Sunday or on Holy Days through my own fault?
3. Have I failed to do my homework and chores through my own fault?
4. Have I been failed to pay attention at Mass or when saying my prayers?
5. Have I disobeyed or acted disrespectfully toward my parents, teachers, or other adults?
6. Have I acted disrespectfully toward my brothers, sisters, classmates, or others?
7. Have I been cruel (mean or hurtful) to anyone or any living thing?
8. Have I caused another person to sin?
9. Have I stolen or destroyed property that belongs to someone else?
10. Have I told lies, repeated gossip, or injured another person's character?
11. Have I been greedy, jealous, or unkind to others?
12. Have I allowed myself to become uncontrollably angry?
13. Have I cheated?
14. Have I argued with or purposely hurt anyone?
15. Have I refused to forgive or refused to tell a sin?
16. Do I make a point of "getting even" with people when they hurt me?
17. Have I been too proud to say, "I am sorry," when I am wrong?
18. Did I make my Easter duties?

Easter Duties: It is a Precept of the Church that the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist must be received at least once a year between the first Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday; however, Catholics should receive Holy Communion often and go to confession regularly.