

# GUIDE to CONFESSION

## EXAMINATION of CONSCIENCE

(BASED on the 10 COMMANDMENTS)

How long ago did I make your last confession?

Did I receive absolution?

Have I performed your penance?

Did I willfully conceal a mortal sin, or confess without true sorrow, without firm purpose of amendment, or without intending to perform your penance?

If so, did I receive Holy Communion? How many times?

Have I also during this time receive Confirmation, the Sacrament of Matrimony or Extreme Unction?

### **1. I AM the LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BESIDES ME.**

Do I seek to love God with all my heart?

Do I spend time with God in prayer every day?

When I pray, do I think about every word (prayer from the heart) or am I just reciting words?

Do I pray with my family?

Do I try my best to eliminate sin from my life, deciding for God in all I think, do and say?

Do I put money and the pleasures and comforts of life before God?

Have I been involved with occult practices such as the New Age rage, fortune telling, horoscopes, numerology, tarot cards, witchcraft, palm reading, medium, spiritism, devil worship, Ouija board, amulets, enneagram, reincarnation, good luck charms or believed in them?

Have I sold, kept or given books such as these?

Did I deny or doubt God's existence or refuse to believe His revelation?

Did I deny that I was Catholic or leave the Catholic faith?

Have I openly rejected or spoken against any doctrine of the Catholic Church?

Have I disbelieved or willfully doubted any article of faith, or suggested or encouraged such doubts in others?

Have I joined any secret society forbidden by the Catholic Church? Do you still belong to it?

Did I despair or presume on God's mercy?

Am I a prisoner of fear, anxiety, worry, guilt, inferiority, hatred of myself?

Do I trust God's loving care for me? Do I accept that the Father loves me?

Do I give God credit for my successes, or have I pridefully credited them to my own doing?

Do I make time to read Scripture, that I may know and hear Jesus and His Father?

Do I seek to surrender myself to God's or do I allow the past to trouble me? Do I hand it over to God?

Do I really try to seek God's will, not mine, in prayer?

Am I unwilling or afraid to say "yes" to God?

### **2. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE the NAME of the LORD YOU GOD IN VAIN.**

Did I use God's name lightly or carelessly in my speech?

Have I been angry with or feared God? (If so, tell Our Lord and hand such feelings over to Him.)

Have I cursed thoughtlessly or used foul language?

Have I wished evil upon any other person?

Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?

Did I break an oath or vow?

Did I take an oath to be revenged or to commit some other crime?

### **3. REMEMBER to KEEP HOLY the SABBATH DAY.**

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation?

Have I received Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin?

Have I tried to observe Sundays as a family day and a day of rest?

Do I do needless work on Sundays? Have I caused others to do so?

Do I hold unforgiveness, pride, lust or envy in my heart when I come to Church and receive Communion?

Do I go to confession regularly?

Have I talked, laughed and gazed about during Mass?

Am I attentive at Mass, actively participating or do I go out of habit and not out of love?

Was I late for Mass or did I leave Mass early without serious reason?

Was I irreverent in Church by immodest conversation, by an unbecoming way of dressing, or by other gross misconduct?

Do I try to put the Word of God into practice every day?

Have I lied in confession or withheld a mortal sin?

Do I fast from food and drink for one hour before receiving Communion?

Do I fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?

Do I abstain from meat on the Fridays of Lent?

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### **4. HONOR YOUR FATHER and YOUR MOTHER**

- Do I honor and obey my parents?
- Have I failed to show love and respect for any member of my family?
- Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives?
- Do I hold unforgiveness in my heart towards any of my family members?
- Have I failed to accept anyone just as he or she is?
- Have I been patient with another's difference's from me?
- Have I been tolerant with another's shortcomings?
- Have I shown respect towards my children?
- Do I discipline my children with love or with anger?
- Do I keep watch on the company they keep and where they spend their time?
- Do I compare my children or favor one over another?
- Have I given my family good religious example?
- Do I try to bring peace into my home life?
- Do I pray for my family?
- Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and children?  
Am I sensitive to their needs?
- Have I provided religious education for my children?
- Have I neglected to have them baptized and prepared and brought at the proper age to Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation?
- Do I encourage my children to make frequent use of the sacraments?
- Have I failed to take them to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I caused them to not observe abstinence on the days prescribed by the Church?
- Do I allow my children to watch immoral television or movies or listen to music which condone or encourage sex and violence?
- Do I respect those in authority (i.e. teachers, police, clergy) and taught my children to do so?

### **5. YOU SHALL NOT KILL**

- Am I guilty of murder?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
- Do I support abortion in my heart or knowingly support anyone who encourages or supports abortion?
- Have I physically or emotionally abused anyone or done damage to someone's reputation?
- Have I abused my body?
- Do I show respect for my body by seeking medical care when needed?
- Have I neglected to follow doctor's orders?
- Do I get proper rest, diet and exercise?

- Do I eat or drink in excess?
- Have I neglected the health and medical needs of my family?
- Have I abused drugs or alcohol or encouraged anyone else to do so?
- Have I been sterilized or used birth control other than natural family planning?
- Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization or birth control?
- Has my spouse been sterilized with my consent?
- Have I given scandal to anyone, leading them into sin?
- Did I attempt suicide?
- Did I participate in or condone mercy killing?
- Have I put my life or the lives of others in danger through careless driving or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
- Have I abused animals by cruelty or neglect?

### **6. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY**

- Have I been faithful to my marriage vows?
- Have I been involved in any sexual activity outside of marriage (including petting and impure touches?)
- Am I guilty of masturbation?
- Have I committed an impure act against nature?
- Do I indulge in impure forms of entertainment?
- Have I sung immodest songs or listened to them?
- Have I participated in or condoned pornography?
- Have I kept, lent or sold pornographic material?
- Do I watch TV shows or movies which promote immoral sex or violence?
- Have I engaged in homosexual activities?
- Do I willfully entertain impure thoughts and desires?
- Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Am I pure in speech? Have I told impure jokes or listened to them?
- Do I dress immodestly?
- Did I marry or advise another to marry outside the Church or condone a marriage outside the Church?

### **7. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL**

- Have I stolen what was not mine?
- Have I received stolen goods?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Have I stolen anything consecrated to God or from a holy place? (This is a sacrilege as well as theft.)
- Have I damaged property? Did I make restitution?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Do I share what I have with the poor?

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### 7. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL (continued)

- Do I support the Church according to my means?
- Do I gamble excessively, denying my family of their needs?
- Do I waste time at work, school or home? Am I lazy?
- Did I cheat on my taxes or cheat anyone else?
- Did I give or accept bribes?
- Have I charged exorbitant prices, or made out false bills, or falsified the quality of my goods?
- Have I passed counterfeit money?
- Have I kept things I found without inquiring for the owner?
- Have I retained any of the money entrusted to me?
- Have I contracted debts without any reasonable hope of paying?
- Have I received pay for work or service I have never done?
- Have I failed to return things I borrowed?
- Do I thank God for all He has given me?
- Have I been wasteful?
- Have I been guilty of fraud or embezzlement in any public office or private trust?
- Have I taken advantage of the poor, the simple, the young and inexperienced?
- Have I caused injury or loss by me negligence or ignorance in the discharge of my profession or employment?
- Have I, in any way, taken part in another's theft, fraud or injustice or concealed information when it was my duty to report it?

### 8. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR

- Have I told lies?
- Have I gossiped or spoken behind another's back?
- Am I sincere in my relationships with others?
- Have I read another's letters without authority?
- Have I betrayed a confidence?
- Have I signed false papers or documents or forged any writings?

- Have I been angry or resentful towards another? Am I nursing a grudge?
- Do I hold hatred in my heart or wished harm to another human being?
- Do I refuse to forgive?
- Am I negative, critical or uncharitable towards others in thought or speech?
- Am I impatient, unkind, envious, jealous or hateful towards another?
- Do I despise or discriminate against any group or individual because of race, religion, nationality, politics, age, profession, gender, or any other reason?
- Do I consider any group or individual inferior to me?
- When someone has needed me, have I refused to help without good reason?

### 9. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE

- Have I kept company with someone else's spouse?
- Have I entertained impure thoughts about another's spouse?
- Have I caused impure thoughts and temptations by impure reading, movies, conversation, or curiosity?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?
- Have I removed any pornographic material from my possession (thrown it away) so that it does not cause further problems?

### 10. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS

- Am I envious or jealous of what others have materially, physically, or spiritually?
- Do I envy other people's families or possessions?
- Are material possessions the goals of my life?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Do I trust God to provide for all of my material and spiritual needs?

## EXAMINATION of CONSCIENCE based on the SEVEN CAPITAL SINS

1. **PRIDE** - Am I self-centered?
2. **GREED** - Are money and material things the real goals in my life?
3. **LUST** - Am I pure in act, speech and thought?
4. **ANGER** - Do I control my temper and tongue?
5. **GLUTTONY** - Do I control my appetites and addictions?
6. **ENVY** - Am I jealous of what others have or are?
7. **SLOTH** - Am I lazy? Am I apathetic? Do I waste time?

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## THREE CONDITIONS NECESSARY for MORTAL SIN

Mortal sin is a horrible offense against God, so horrible that it destroys the life of grace in the soul.

Three simultaneous conditions must be fulfilled for a mortal sin:

- (1) the act must be something very serious;
- (2) the person must have sufficient understanding of what is being done;
- (3) the person must have sufficient freedom of the will.

So I cannot commit a mortal sin if the matter is not serious (e.g., if I stole a small amount of money from my employer), or if I did not know what I was doing (e.g., if I were to hurt someone accidentally or unthinkingly), or if I did not act with full freedom (e.g., I was under great physical or emotional pressure).

**GOLDEN RULE** - Sin is like a ticking time-bomb which could explode and suddenly send us to Hell.

### NEVER RISK LIVING IN MORTAL SIN EVEN FOR ONE HOUR.

When you realize you are in mortal sin, make an **IMMEDIATE** act of perfect sorrow, promising to go to confession as soon as possible. Guilt is removed, but other sacraments may be received only **AFTER** confession.

### WORSE SIN?

If it is not the worse one, it certainly is the one most severely condemned by Jesus Christ: **UNFORGIVENESS**.  
**"If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you."** (Mt. 6, 14) **"My command to you is: Love your enemies; pray for your persecutors. (Mt. 5, 44)"**

## PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION

*Jesus, my Lord and my God, I kneel before You, dying on the Cross. Fill me with a deep sorrow for all my sins. You alone know their number and gravity. Send me the Holy Spirit, His wisdom and love, that I may not fool or excuse myself but admit my guilt.*

*When I look at others around me, I am often tempted to feel good about myself, thinking that I am better than they.*

*But then I look at You, hanging from the Cross, I know that I nailed you there by my sins. I also spat on Your face, crowned You with thorns and scourged You. Your kind, piercing eyes leave me no room to hide. Yes, I am guilty. I have broken Your law. Forgive me.*

*Mary, Mother of Jesus and my Mother, how much pain I caused you and your Jesus by sinning! Ask Him to have mercy on me and take away all my sins of thought, desire, looks, actions and omissions. Assure Him that He has not died in vain for me. With His help and your prayers, I will not sin again. Amen.*

## HOW to GO to CONFESSION

1. You always have the option to go to confession anonymously, that is, behind the screen or face to face, if you so desire.
2. After the priest greets you in the name of Christ, make the sign of the Cross. He may choose to include a reading from Scripture for reflection. Then say: "Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been (state how long) since my last confession. These are my sins."
3. Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest. (You might even want to discuss the circumstances and the root causes of your sins and ask the priest for advice or direction.)
4. Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then make an Act of Contrition for your sins.
5. The priest will dismiss you with the words of praise: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good" or "the Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace." And you respond by saying either: "His mercy endures forever" or "Thanks be to God."
6. Spend some time with Our Lord thanking and praising Him for the gift of His mercy. Try to perform your penance as soon as possible.