

# THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION



## INSTRUCTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR A GOOD CONFESSION

**SS. Peter and Paul Parish – Westside**

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The basic requirement for a good Confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the Prodigal Son and acknowledging our sins with true sorrow before his representative, the priest.

### **BEFORE CONFESSION**

Begin by imploring the light and grace of Almighty God, Who alone can discover to you the malice of your sins, and can give you true repentance.

**Come, Holy Ghost, divine Spirit of light and truth, assist me to discover all my sins, to be truly sorry for them, to confess them sincerely, and to amend my life. Amen Holy Mary, Pray for me. St. Joseph, pray for me. My Guardian Angel, help me that I may make a good confession.**

Be truly sorry for your sins. The essential act of Penance, on the part of the sinner, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of love one has for God. Understood in this way, contrition is, therefore, the beginning and the heart of conversion which brings the person back to God like the Prodigal Son returning to his father, and which has in the Sacrament of Penance its visible sign.

The resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic. This does not mean that one will never sin again. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

### **ACT OF CONTRITION**

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; 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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

## **EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

Examine your conscience. Recall your sins. Calmly ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God's Commandments.

### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD**

#### **THE FIRST COMMANDMENT – I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.**

- Have I performed my duties toward God reluctantly or grudgingly?
- Did I neglect my prayer life? Did I recite my usual prayers?
- Did I receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal (serious, grave) sin or without the necessary preparation?
- Did I violate the one-hour Eucharistic fast?
- Did I fail to mention a grave sin in my previous confession?
- Did I seriously believe in something superstitious or engage in a superstitious practice (palm-reading, fortune telling or Ouija board, etc.)?
- Did I seriously doubt a matter of Faith?
- Did I put my faith in danger, without a good reason, by reading a book, pamphlet, or magazine that contains material contrary to Catholic faith or morals?
- Did I endanger my faith by joining or attending meetings of organizations opposed to the Catholic faith (non-Catholic services, the Communist Party, Freemasonry, New Age cults, or other religions)? Did I take part in one of its activities?
- Have I committed the sin of sacrilege (profanation of a sacred person, place or thing)?
- Did I deepen my faith by reading the Holy Bible, religious books... etc.?

#### **THE SECOND COMMANDMENT – Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.**

- Did I fail to try my best to fulfill the promises and resolutions that I made to God?
- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I make use of God's name mockingly, jokingly, angrily, or in any other irreverent manner?
- Did I make use of the Blessed Virgin Mary's name or another saint's name mockingly, jokingly, angrily, or in any other irreverent manner?
- Have I been a sponsor in Baptism or participated actively in other ceremonies outside the Catholic Church?
- Did I tell a lie under oath? Did I break (private or public) vows?

- Did I use bad language?

### **THE THIRD COMMANDMENT – Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.**

- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of obligation?
- Did I fail to dress appropriately for Mass?
- Have I, without sufficient reason, arrived at Mass so late that I failed to fulfill the Sunday or Holy Day of obligation?
- Did I allow myself to be distracted during Mass, by not paying attention, looking around out of curiosity, etc.?
- Did I cause another to be distracted?
- Have I performed any work or business activity that would inhibit the worship due to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day or the appropriate relaxation of mind and body on a Sunday or a Holy Day of obligation?
- Did I fail to generously help the Church in her necessities to the extent that I am able?
- Did I fail to fast or abstain on a day prescribed by the Church?

### **THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT – Honor thy father and thy mother.**

#### **FOR PARENTS**

- Have I neglected to teach my children their prayers, take or send them to church, or give them a Christian education?  
Have I given them bad example?
- Have I neglected to watch over my children, to monitor their companions, the books they read, the movies and TV shows they watch?
- Have I failed to see to it that my children made their First Confession and First Communion?
- Have I failed to see to it that my children have received the Sacrament of Confirmation?
- Did I disobey my parents or lawful superiors in important matters?

#### **FOR CHILDREN**

- Was I obedient toward my parents?
- Did I neglect to help my parents when my help was needed?
- Did I treat my parents with little affection or respect?
- Did I react proudly when I was corrected by my parents?
- Did I have a disordered desire for independence?
- Did I do my chores?

## **THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT – Thou shalt not kill.**

- Did I easily get angry or lose my temper?
- Was envious or jealous of others?
- Did I injure or take the life of anyone? Was I ever reckless in driving?
- Was I an occasion of sin for others by way of conversation, the telling of jokes religiously, racially, or sexually offensive, my way of dressing, inviting somebody to attend certain shows, lending harmful books or magazines, helping someone to steal, etc.? Did I try to repair the scandal done?
- How many persons did I lead to sin? What sins were involved?
- Did I neglect my health? Did I attempt to take my life?
- Did I mutilate myself or another?
- Did I get drunk or use prohibited drugs?
- Did I eat or drink more than a sufficient amount, allowing myself to get carried away by gluttony?
- Did I participate in any form of physical violence?
- Did I consent to or actively take part in direct sterilization (tubal ligation, vasectomy. etc.)? Do I realize that this will have a permanent effect on my married life and that I will have to answer to God for its consequences?
- Did I consent to, advise, or actively take part in an abortion? Was I aware that the Church punishes with automatic excommunication (*latae sententiae*) those who procure and achieve abortion? Do I realize that this is a very grave crime?
- Did I cause harm to anyone with my words or actions?
- Did I desire revenge or harbor enmity, hatred, or ill-feelings when someone offended me?
- Did I ask pardon whenever I offended anyone?
- Did I refuse to forgive?
- Did I insult or offensively tease others?
- Did I quarrel with one of my brothers or sisters?
- Did I neglect good works, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving?
- Did I try to obtain plenary indulgence?
- Did I try to receive the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, seven moral virtues, four cardinal virtues and three theological virtues.

## **THE SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDMENTS – Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

### **Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.**

- Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts?

- Did I consent to evil desi.res against virtue of purity, even though I may not have carried them out? Were there any circumstances that aggravated the sin: affinity (relationship by marriage), consanguinity (blood relationship), either the married state or the consecration to God of a person involved?
- Did I engage in impure conversations? Did I start them?
- Did I look for fun in forms of entertainment that places me in proximate occasions of sin, such as certain dances, movies, shows, or books with immoral contents? Did I frequent houses of ill repute or keep bad company?
- Did I realize that I may already have been committing a sin by placing myself in a proximate occasion of sin, such as sharing a room with a person I find sexually attractive, or being alone with such a person in circumstances that could lead to sin?
- Did I fail to take care of those details of modesty and decency that are the safeguard of purity?
- Did I fail before going to a show or reading a book, to find out its moral implications, so as not to put myself in immediate danger of sinning and in order to avoid distorting my conscience?
- Did I willfully look at an indecent picture (any form of pornography) or cast immodest look upon myself for another? Did I willfully desire to commit such a sin?
- Did I lead others to sins of impurity or immodesty? What sins?
- Did I commit an impure act? By myself, through masturbation (which is objectively a mortal sin)? With someone else? How many times? With someone of the same or opposite sex? Was there any circumstance of relationship (such as affinity) that could have given the sin special gravity? Did this illicit relationship result in pregnancy? Did I do anything to prevent or end that pregnancy?
- Do I have friendships that are habitual occasions of sexual sins? Am I prepared to end them?
- In courtship, is true love my fundamental reason for wanting to be with other person? Do I live the constant and cheerful sacrifice of not putting the person I love in danger of sinning? Do I degrade human love by confusing it with selfishness or mere pleasure?
- Did I engage in acts such as petting, necking, passionate kisses, or prolonged embraces?

#### FOR MARRIED COUPLES

- Did I, without serious reason, deprive my spouse of the marital right?

- Did I claim my own rights in a way which showed no concern for my spouse's state of mind or health? Did I betray conjugal fidelity in desire or deed?
- Did I take "the pill" or use any other artificial birth control device (or practice) before or after new life had already been conceived?
- Did I without grave reason with the intention of avoiding conception, make use of marriage on only those days when offspring would not likely be engendered?
- Did I suggest to another person the use of birth control pills or another artificial method of preventing pregnancy (like condoms)?
- Did I have a hand in contributing to the contraceptive mentality by my advice, jokes, or attitudes? (On abortion, contraception, sterilization, etc., see the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment)

**THE SEVENTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS – Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.**

- Did I steal? How much money? Or how much was the object worth?
- Did I give it back, or at least have the intention. of doing so?
- Have I done or caused damage to another person's property? To what extent?
- Did I harm anyone by deception, fraud or coercion in business contracts or transactions?
- Did I unnecessarily spend beyond my means? Do I spend too much money because of vanity, or caprice?
- Did I give alms according to my capacity?
- Was I envious of my neighbor's goods?
- Did I neglect to pay my debts?
- Did I knowingly accept stolen goods?
- Did I desire to steal?
- Did I give in to laziness or love of comfort rather than diligently working or studying?
- Was I greedy? Do I have an excessively materialistic view of life?

**THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT – Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

- Did I tell lies? Did I repair any damage that may have resulted as a consequence of this as much as possible?
- Have I unjustly or rashly accused others?

- Did I sin by detraction, that is, by telling the faults of another person without necessity? Did I sin by calumny, that is by telling derogatory lies about another person?
- Did I engage in gossip, backbiting, or tale telling?
- Did I reveal a secret without due cause?

### **AM I OBEDIENT TO THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH?**

1. To attend Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, and rest from unnecessary work on these days.
2. To observe the days of abstinence and fasting.
3. To confess our sins to a priest, at least once a year.
4. To receive the Holy Eucharist at least once a year during Easter time.
5. To contribute to the support of our Pastors.
6. Not to solemnize marriage at the forbidden times; nor to marry persons within the forbidden degrees of kindred, or otherwise prohibited by the Church, nor secretly.

### **DO I LOVE MY NEIGHBOR BY PERFORMING AT LEAST ONE OF THE WORKS OF MERCY ON A REGULAR BASIS?**

#### **CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY:**

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked
4. Shelter the homeless
5. Comfort the prisoners
6. Visit the sick
7. Bury the dead

#### **SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY:**

1. Teach the ignorant
2. Pray for the living and dead
3. Correct sinners
4. Counsel those in doubt
5. Console the sorrowful
6. Bear wrongs patiently
7. Forgive wrongs willingly



## **SINS AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST**

1. Presumption of God's Mercy – Despair
2. Impugning the known truth – Envy at another's spiritual good
3. Obstinacy in sin – Final impenitence

## **SINS CRYING TO HEAVEN FOR VENGEANCE**

1. Willful murder
2. The sin of Sodom
3. Oppression of the poor
4. Defrauding laborers of their wages

## **NINE WAYS OF BEING ACCESSORY TO ANOTHER'S SIN**

1. By counsel
2. By command
3. By consent
4. By provocation
5. By praise or flattery
6. By concealment
7. By partaking
8. By silence
9. By defense of the ill done

## **THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS**

1. Pride
2. Covetousness
3. Lust
4. Anger
5. Gluttony
6. Envy
7. Sloth

## **FOUR LAST THINGS TO REMEMBERED**

Death – Judgment – Hell - Heaven

## **PRAYER AFTER EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

O My God, I cry to Thee with the prodigal son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; I am no longer worthy to be called Thy son." Thou Whose property is always to have mercy and to spare the penitent, O meet me in pity, embrace me in love and forgive me all my sins. I confess my sins unto Thee, O Christ, Healer of our souls, Lord of Life. Heal me of my spiritual sickness, Thou, O God, seest me in all the foulness of my sins! Blessed Jesus, speak for me, plead for me, come between my soul and my offended God, that I perish not. Amen.

## **HOW TO CONFESS YOUR SINS**

1. Make an Examination of Conscience
2. Go to Confession
3. When you are in the Confessional, say: "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. My last Confession was ... ." If you can not remember when your last Confession was, just be honest. Give an estimate. The priest is glad you have come to Confession now.
4. Confess your sins in number and in kind, to the best of your recollection. If you can not remember, give an estimate, or indicate when something was committed more than once.
5. Conclude with, "For these and all others I have forgotten or did not discern, I am truly sorry."
6. The priest will give you a penance and ask you to make an Act of Contrition. You can use the following: "O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend You, my God, You who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen"  
If you have any questions, you can ask the priest. Then add: I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life that I don't remember.  
The priest will assign you some penance and give you some advice to help you to be a better Christian.
7. The priest will say the word of absolution. Trust in Jesus – your sins have truly been forgiven and washed away.
8. Go and perform your penance.  
Listen to the words and be willing to do the penance as soon as possible. The penance will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

## **AFTER CONFESSION**

- Give thanks to God for having forgiven you once again.
- Promptly and devoutly fulfill the penance given by the priest.  
Although you may receive Holy Communion even before performing your penance, it is advisable to do it as soon as possible.
- If you recall some serious sin that you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others but be sure to include it in your next Confession.
- Lead the life of a good, holy, and joyful Christian Catholic.

**To those who have been far away from the sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love, I make this appeal: Come back to this source of grace; do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you. He will heal you, and you will be at peace with God.**

### **THANKSGIVING AFTER CONFESSING SINS AND PERFORMING PENANCE**

Eternal Father! I thank Thee for Thy goodness and mercy. Thou hast had compassion on me, although in my folly I had wandered far away from Thee and offended Thee most grievously. With fatherly love Thou has received me anew after so many relapses into sin and forgiven me my offenses through the Holy Sacrament of Penance. Blessed be Thy infinite mercy! Never again will I offend Thee. All that I am, and all that I have, shall be consecrated to Thy service and Thy glory. Amen

### **PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH**

O Faithful Guardian and Father of virgins, Blessed Joseph, to whom was confided the care of Jesus, and of Mary the Queen of Virgins, I most humbly supplicate thee, by the love thou didst bear Jesus and Mary, to obtain for me that, being preserved from every stain during my whole life, I may be ever able to serve them with unspotted purity of mind and body. Amen

### **SUBJECT FOR DAILY MEDITATION**

Remember, O Christian soul that thou hast this day, and every day of thy life: God to glorify, Jesus to imitate, The Angels and Saints to invoke, A soul to save, A body to mortify, Sins to expiate, Virtues to acquire, Hell to avoid, Heaven to gain, Eternity to prepare for, Time to profit by, Neighbors to edify, The world to despise, Devils to combat, Passions to subdue, Death perhaps to suffer, Judgment to undergo.

## THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

The sacrament of Reconciliation is a special encounter with Jesus Christ, it is a fruitful source of grace. The Catechism tells us: “The sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true “spiritual resurrection,” restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God” (1468).

Indeed, the sacrament of Reconciliation is a time for love, mercy and healing. Regrettably, some see this sacrament of forgiveness and healing as a cause for anxiety and fear. Jesus intended it to be a time of compassion and mercy and every priest in confession is conscious of being a minister of understanding and forgiveness. When Jesus gave us this sacrament He knew well our human nature and knew the need we have to hear the freeing words: “I absolve you of your sins. . . .”

The Church recommends monthly confession as a spiritual discipline. At a minimum, Catholics must make a confession of sins when they are conscious of mortal sin before the reception of holy Communion. **The precept of the Church says that Catholics ought to confess their sins in the sacrament of Confession at least once a year during the Easter Season, under mortal sin.**

### THERE ARE MANY BLESSINGS IN FREQUENT CONFESSION (CF. CCC 1425-1498). AMONG SUCH BLESSINGS ARE THE FOLLOWING:

1. It restores divine life to those who have lost it through mortal sin.
2. It increases grace and one’s capacity for grace and helps one to grow in Christian maturity.
3. It brings order and peace into one’s life by causing one to pause at regular intervals and ask oneself the all-important question: Where am I in my relationship with God?
4. It improves personal relations with others by making one aware of attitudes and actions that cause pain to others.
5. It motivates one to practice the basic Christian virtues: faith, hope, charity, humility, self-denial, repentance, detachment from the pagan ways of modern life.