



Guide to the Sacrament of Penance

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross with the priest. Afterward you may begin by saying:

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

It has been *(How long? A month, a year, longer? Just be honest.)* **since my last confession.”**

“In that time I have...” *(Confess sins.)*

When we confess our sins, the key is to be specific. The more open and honest we are with Our Lord, the more open to His grace and forgiveness we will be... and the more we will allow Him to heal us deeply. Confess your sins specifically and how often you committed these sins.

Then say: **“I am sorry for these sins and all the sins of my past life.”**

*The priest will give you some advice and assign a penance. **After confession is over**, then fulfill your penance.*

After the penance is given, wait for the priest to ask you to make “An Act of Contrition.”

(You can read this form of the Act of Contrition. You don't need to have it memorized.)

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

The priest then says the words of Absolution:

“God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son...

I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Amen.

The priest then says: **“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.”**

“His Mercy endures forever.”

Then he says: **“The Lord has forgiven your sins. Go in peace.”**

“Thanks be to God.”

“Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!” Pope Saint John Paul II

Examination of Conscience Introduction

COLLEGE LEVEL

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines prayer as, “the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit” (no. 2565). As a “relationship,” prayer involves dialogue: we focus our attention on God, and He focuses His attention on us. In prayer, we place God at the center.

What follows is a guide to making an examination of conscience. This is a kind of prayer. The questions are meant to prompt you to think about the ways in which God has been at work in your life, and where you have failed to respond to His loving presence.

When reading through the questions, if you only pay attention to the ways that you have failed, you might fall into the temptation of placing *yourself* at the center of your prayer. *God must be at the center!* Your examination must focus on Him, and how—in spite of everything you have or have not done—He loves you. He already knows your sins, weaknesses, and failures (see Ps. 139), and He alone can forgive and heal you (You cannot heal yourself!).

“*See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are*” (1 Jn. 3:1).

God looks upon you with eyes of infinite love. His gaze is always and only a gaze of love, for “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8). As you take this time to examine your conscience, first call to mind this gaze of the Father: the “Father who is good beyond measure” (CCC, 2565). Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to make this examination a prayer. Then—fixing your attention on Him who is “rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4)—“confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help” (Heb. 4:16).

Love for God

Have I made time to pray every day?

Have I read or prayed with Sacred Scripture?

Have I gone to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days? Have I missed Mass through my own fault, out of convenience, tiredness, or indifference?

At Mass, have I participated attentively and reverently?

Have I received Holy Communion knowing there was serious sin on my soul? Have I neglected the Sacrament of Penance when I knew I needed God’s mercy? Have I intentionally failed to confess a serious sin in Confession?

Have I misused God’s Holy Name by swearing or speaking irreverently? Have I rejected God, His Commandments, or the teachings of the Church? Have I mocked the Catholic faith, the Church, the Sacraments, or those trying to live faithfully?

Have I been embarrassed to be Catholic? Have I failed to defend or explain the faith when I reasonably could have done so with charity?

Have I allowed doubt, confusion, or disagreement to turn into cynicism, laziness, or indifference?

Have I thanked God for the blessings He has given me?

Have I asked the Holy Spirit for help in my studies, relationships, decisions, fight against temptations, and future vocation?

Love for My Neighbor and for Myself

Have I been disrespectful, dismissive, or ungrateful toward my parents, family, professors, employers, or others in authority?

Have I been arrogant, selfish, stubborn, or unwilling to receive correction? Have I held grudges or resentments? Have I refused to forgive?

Have I spoken hatefully, gossiped, slandered, lied, about another person? Have I mocked, excluded, used, or judged others in person, online, or in group chats? Have I treated roommates, classmates, coworkers, teammates, or friends with impatience, contempt, or unkindness?

Have I looked at others lustfully or deliberately entertained sexual thoughts or fantasies?

Have I viewed pornography or sexually explicit content in pictures, videos, shows, books, or social media?

Have I masturbated?

Have I lustfully kissed, touched, or used another person sexually?

Have I had sex outside the Sacrament of Marriage?

Have I used contraception?

Have I had an abortion, encouraged someone to have an abortion, or failed to offer support for someone in an unplanned pregnancy?

Have I committed adultery in desire, or action? Have I sought romantic or sexual attention from someone who is married, dating, engaged, or otherwise unavailable?

Have I dressed, acted, posted, or spoken in ways that did not honor God, myself, or others?

Have I stolen anything or used what belongs to another without permission? Have I been academically dishonest? Have I plagiarized, copied work, shared answers, or misused AI and online tools against my school’s expectations?

Have I been lazy or irresponsible in what is asked of me?

Have I wasted excessive time on my phone, social media, streaming, gaming, or entertainment?

Have I misused alcohol, drugs, or other substances? Have I pressured others to do so or placed myself in situations where my judgment was impaired?

Have I participated in occult practices such as Ouija boards, tarot cards, fortune tellers, séances, or astrology?

Have I been patient, kind, generous, and gentle towards others?

When my conscience told me to do something good, did I do it, or did I ignore it? When my conscience told me not to do something, did I avoid it, or did I do it anyways?



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