

LEVELING-UP YOUR CONFESSION

REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.

What does it look like to repent?

- I examine myself, name the sins, and number them, especially if it's a mortal sin.
- I own up to my sin, not shifting the blame to others. If it's my sin, then it's something that I chose.
- I acknowledge that this sin hates me. It wants to destroy me, my friendships, my family, my vocation, etc. It wants to lead me and my loved ones to hell for eternal torment.
- ...and sin hates God. By my sins, I turned my back on the One who gave His back to scourging at the pillar.
- ...and sin's promises are poisonous lies. They are cheap counterfeits of what God truly offers me.
- In the name of Jesus, I renounce my sin. I reject it. I repudiate it. Sin is never welcome again into my heart.

What does it look like to believe in the Gospel?

- I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Sin may seem all-powerful in my life, especially if I've been its slave. But all power belongs to the Lord. Sin is impotent before Jesus, and the gates of hell fall before His Church.
- I believe that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. The Good Shepherd rejoices to place the lost sheep on His shoulders and He calls all of heaven and earth to rejoice with Him. Angels are singing in the confessional.
- I believe that Jesus Christ restores me, a repentant sinner, to my true identity as a beloved child of the Father. He restores my beauty that the Father may delight in me forever. He befriends me that I may share in His inheritance. He does not consider me a problem to be solved, but a friend to be loved.
- I believe that Jesus Christ satisfies my heart. Whatever I was looking for with sin, Jesus actually delivers, and He offers even more, giving me good things not merely according to my needs but according to His boundless delight in me, His beloved.
- I believe that Jesus has not destined me for sin, but for holiness. And even if I experience such a struggle to avoid returning to sin, Jesus accomplishes his purpose for me, perfectly and sweetly, all with delight. For again, Jesus Christ is Lord. He will never let me be snatched from his hand.

As you examine your conscience and name your sins, repent of them and believe in the Gospel.

- Let the Holy Spirit reveal the sins and lies that you are to repent of, casting them at the foot of the Cross.
- Let the Spirit stir up in you a great faith that knows the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ which surpasses mere natural knowledge. Allow Him to teach you what He wants you to learn today.

When you confess your sins, focus on repenting of your sins and believing in the Gospel.

- Avoid being vague about your sin: ex. "I was not a good person." Be clear of what sin you're repenting.
- Avoid merely describing something that made you sad or upset without repenting of a specific sin.
- Beware of circumlocutions that avoid owning up to sin: ex. "I struggle with this sin" vs. "I chose this sin."
- Avoid blaming others: ex. "I'm impatient with my neighbor because he's a real jerk and he deserves it!" vs. "I failed to love my neighbor, and it's my fault." As best as you can, avoid naming other people's sin.
- Manifest your repentance, not your resumé. Avoid trying to convince the priest that you deserve to be forgiven because you're really a good person and/or because you're going to try harder this time. Rather, trust in Jesus.

Longterm, it helps to go to confession frequently (every 1-4 weeks) and to the same priest (or 2-3 priests).

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD; FOR HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER.

In confession, God not only forgives you, but He also blesses you. Receive his blessing with lively gratitude.

- Pope Francis heard the Lord calling him to be a priest after he went to confession. That can happen!
- Give time to prayer, especially before the Eucharist. The Lord may lead you into a new chapter of grace.
- After confession, dedicate yourself to days of gratitude: "Give thanks to the Lord!"

God will draw you into greater sorrow, purified and sanctified. Receive this grace by continuing to repent and believe in the Gospel.

- The prodigal son was only kinda sorry when he returned home. At his father's banquet, I suspect he began to recognize just how much his father loves him and how he had rejected and abused his love. Then, the prodigal son will become the penitential son. That is, the more I believe in the Gospel, the more I will also repent of sin.
- Confession takes away hellish shame that doubts God's mercy ("God could never love me"), but it increases our holy sorrow that trusts God's mercy ("Like a fool, I ran away from the love that I really desired.").

God will test you, even allowing the forces of hell to tempt you. Receive this grace with persevering trust and love for the Father, who is good and whose mercy endures forever.

- After Christ's baptism, the Spirit led him into the desert to test him, allowing Satan to tempt him. If Christ was tempted after His baptism, so will we be after our confessions.
- Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating us as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? ([Hebrews 12](#))

Here are the common temptations from the enemy:

- Tempter: God didn't really forgive you.
 - Christian: Father, I believe that you forgave me through the priest's absolution. Christ instituted this sacrament, and if the priest said the words and I didn't purposely lie, the sacrament works.
- Tempter: God forgave you, but soon enough, you'll sin again. You'll always be a sinner.
 - Christian: Father, I belong to you, not to sin. You don't want me to sin, and you are all-powerful. I renounce all discouragement. I trust you and enduring mercy.
- Tempter: Look, you're still being tempted! Your confession did nothing. You're still stuck with me. It's no good going back to God who abandons you so quickly.
 - Christian: Father, I choose you, for you are good and you are always with me. Thank you for this chance to choose you.
- Tempter: Go ahead and avoid sin, but you'll be miserable.
 - Christian: Father, you are my delight, and I thank you for you are good. Sin only offers false happiness.
- Tempter: Sin is fun, and confession is free. So why not sin some more and go back to confession?
 - Christian: Father, thank you for your faithfulness. Help me be faithful to you. Sin is not fun. It's hell. I choose you, for your mercy endures forever.
- Tempter: I get it, I get it. But how about just one more sin—a fun one!—and then I'll leave alone, I promise.
 - Christian: In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of His Precious Blood, I renounce this sin and all its lies. Jesus, cover and seal me in your Blood!

Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for us!

Mary, queen of saints, pray for us!

Mary, tender mother, pray for us!

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE BEFORE CONFESSION

COMMON MORTAL SINS

I. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.

- Receiving Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin.
- Purposely not confessing a mortal sin in Confession.
- Obstinate denying a teaching of the Church.
- Using fortune tellers, ouija boards, tarot cards, etc.

II. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

- Taking in vain the names God, Jesus, Christ, Mary, etc.

III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

- Deliberately missing Mass on Sundays and Holy Days without due cause.

IV. Honor your father and your mother.

V. You shall not kill.

- Serious outburst of anger.
- Attempting suicide.
- Having an abortion.
- Encouraging another to have an abortion.
- Getting drunk.
- Getting high.

VI. You shall not commit adultery.

- Pornography.
- Masturbation.
- Sexual acts before marriage. (*Be specific, not graphic.*)
- Sexual acts outside of marriage. (*Be specific, not graphic.*)
- Homosexual acts.
- Artificial contraception.
- Artificial fertilization, including IVF.

VII. You shall not steal.

- Stealing something worth more than a day's wage.

VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Attacking someone's reputation by lying.
- Attacking someone's reputation by revealing a secret.

IX. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

- Consenting to impure thoughts or desires.

X. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.

COMMON VENIAL SINS

- Neglecting to pray to God.
- Speaking poorly of God, the Church, priests, any Christian.
- Valuing how others see me over how God sees me.
- Dishonoring my father or mother.
- Neglecting my family duties.
- Thinking better of oneself and poorly of another.
- Being judgmental or overly critical.
- Not resting on Sundays.
- Wasting time at work.
- Overusing social media, especially if neglecting my duties.
- Blaming others for my own failures.
- Not forgiving others, but resenting them.
- Brooding over injuries.
- Jealousy.
- Celebrating others' failures.
- Failing to be kind and respectful.
- Mild forms of racism or bigotry.
- Lying.
- Gossip.
- Flattery.
- Speaking crudely or impatiently.
- Dressing immodestly.
- Using impure language or telling impure joke

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PRE-CONFESSION CHECKLIST:

1. Are you sorry for all of your sins, even the ones that you can't remember?
2. Are you ready to confess all the mortal sins that you can remember since your last Confession?
3. Are you willing to do penance?
4. Will you try to avoid sin in the future?
5. If you are living with someone before marriage or are in a second marriage, will you resolve to change?

The Rite of Confession

Begin with the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The priest may say: May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy.

You say: **Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been _____ (years/months/etc.) since my last Confession. (Or: This is my first Confession.) I am _____ (single/married/etc.).**

You can also briefly note anything else important.

CONFESSING YOUR SINS

You say: **"And these are my sins . . ."**

You must confess each mortal sin since your last Confession. Name and number them. If applicable, briefly add any details that change the nature of the sin.

You can confess venial sins. No details are needed.

If applicable, you can also renew your sorrow for previously forgiven sins.

Finish with these or similar words:

For these sins, for any sin that I'm forgetting, and for all the sins of my past, I am sorry.

THE PRIEST'S COUNSEL

The priest offers you counsel, calling you to acknowledge God's perfect love for you, to leave all sin, and to follow God with your whole heart.

THE PENANCE

In reparation for your sin, the priest will ask you to perform a penance. Make sure you understand what he is asking you to do. Ask clarifying questions if needed.

THE ACT OF CONTRITION

You say: **My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.**

THE PRIEST'S ABSOLUTION

The priest absolves you, saying: God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, **AND I ABSOLVE YOU FROM YOUR SINS IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

You respond: **Amen.**

The priest says: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

You respond: **His mercy endures forever.**

Priest: The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.*or:* May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

You respond: **Thanks be to God.**

CONFESSION FOLLOW-UP

1. Do your penance as soon as you can.
2. If you remember mortal sins that you forgot to confess, mention them at your next Confession.
3. Return to Confession soon and frequently.
4. Give thanks to the Lord! Praise Him!