

# A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

(take this with you ... it's really okay)



## BEFORE YOU GO

Examine your conscience, that is, reflect on what sins you've committed. To guide you, just Google "examination of conscience" and you'll find resources to help you. It's even all right to make a list to bring with you if that helps.



## INTRODUCTION

When you come before the priest, begin by making the Sign of the Cross (praying the words out loud), and continue by saying, "Bless me, Father, I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession. These are my sins..."



## CONFESSION

List the sins you've committed that came to mind during your examination of conscience. Don't be too general ("I haven't been a good person"), but a lot of detail isn't necessary (you don't need to tell the whole story of how a sin came about). If you're not sure if something is a sin, ask the priest. This isn't counseling, so unless you ask, the priest likely won't give you advice. He'll just move on to ...



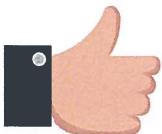
## PENANCE

The priest will suggest something for you to do or pray as a response to God's mercy. You'll have to remember what this is and do it after the confession is over, so pay attention.



## ACT OF CONTRITION

The priest will then ask you to pray out loud your "Act of Contrition," to demonstrate your sorrow for your sins: "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."



## ABSOLUTION

Don't get up to leave after that prayer, because the best part is yet to come: The priest will extend his hands in your direction and he will pray the Prayer of Absolution: "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 grant 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. Amen." You respond: "Amen."



## CONCLUSION

The priest will then likely say something like, "God has freed you from your sin. Go in Peace." To which you can respond: "Thanks be to God." Don't forget to do your penance. If it is saying certain prayers, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.

# An Examination of Conscience for the Whole Family

This examination of conscience is taken from  
The Catholic Family Book of Prayers.

This brief examination of conscience, loosely based on the Ten Commandments, may be used in preparation for receiving the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, or as a kind of daily examen. Your family may wish to review it together silently, or with the guidance of a reader.

## **Family:**

- . Have I made anything more important than God: myself, others, money, things I own, things I want, ideas, activities, or goals?
- . Have I set aside time to pray to God every day?
- . Have I acted pridefully, as if I know everything, am better than others, or don't need God or others?
- . Have I used God's name in a bad way?
- . Have my words hurt God, his Church, or the good he wants for all people?
- . Have my words and actions given glory to God's name?
- . Have I shared my faith with those who do not know God?
- . Have I gone to Mass when I should?
- . Have I fully shared in the celebration of Mass?
- . Have I listened to the Word of God and the homily?
- . Have I received the Eucharist reverently?
- . Have I spent my Sundays in prayer, rest, service, and family time?
- . Have I given love and respect to my father and mother?
- . Have I obeyed them?
- . Have I tried to help them without being asked?
- . Have I whined, complained, nagged, or otherwise been difficult toward them?
- . Have I been loving and respectful to my brothers and sisters?



## **Parents:**

- . Have I shown love and respect to my children?
- . Have I been patient and kind?
- . Have I disciplined my children with love, and in ways that help them become the people God wants them to be?
- . Have I been a good citizen?
- . Have my words and actions strengthened my community, or harmed it?
- . Have I hurt others, with my hands or my words?
- . Have I given support or encouragement to those who hurt others?
- . Have I excluded others, or treated others with less than the respect they deserve as children of God?
- . Have I held onto anger or hatred toward others?
- . Have I refused to forgive others?
- . Have I respected my body?
- . Have I given my body what it needs to be strong and healthy?
- . Have I viewed pornography, engaged in sexual acts outside of marriage, or otherwise offended human dignity for my own pleasure?

## **Family:**

- . Have I taken what does not belong to me?
- . Have I wasted time or resources?
- . Have I used my talents and resources to help those in need?
- . Have I let others borrow my possessions for good reason?
- . Have I done my work well?
- . Have I contributed to the good of others through my work?
- . Have I done my chores and schoolwork as best I can, with a good attitude?
- . Have I always told the truth to myself, God, and others?
- . Have I gossiped, or shared information I shouldn't have?
- . Have I been grateful for what I have, or greedy to have what others have? Have I been generous with my time and possessions?
- . Have I given away what I do not need?

*“Return to your conscience, question it. . . .  
Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do,  
see God as your witness.”*

*– St. Augustine*