

## FIVE STEPS for a GOOD CONFESSION

1. Examine your conscience.
2. Be sincerely sorry for your sins.
3. Confess your sins.
4. Resolve to amend your life.
5. After your confession, do the penance the priest assigns.

### Prayer Said in Confessional

"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because of Thy just punishments, 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 sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen."

Memorize the above Act of Contrition.

**Procedure in the Confessional**  
The priest may begin with a Scripture reading. After he finishes, you say:  
*"Bless me, Father, in this confession. It is— a week, or a month (state the length of time)— since my last confession. I accuse myself of the following sins."*

Then tell your mortal sins and the number of times committed. If you have no mortal sins to confess, then confess two or three venial sins you have committed since your last confession. When you have finished telling your sins, you should say:

*"For these and all the sins of my past life, especially for my sins of— I am truly sorry."*

The priest now gives the necessary advice, assigns your penance and asks you to say the Act of Contrition (in some form). Then wait and listen as the priest gives the absolution in English.

Then say **THANK YOU, FATHER**, and leave the Confessional and perform the penance assigned by the priest.

Don't be hasty

Don't be superficial

Avoid anxiety

### Examination of Conscience

Many of these sins are mortal and the Eucharist is forbidden until a good confession is made to a priest. If in doubt whether a sin is mortal or venial, confess it and consult a good catechism or priest very loyal to the Holy Father and Rome's teachings. A mortal sin involves a serious matter, there is sufficient reflection and it is committed with full consent of the will.

- Did I deny or doubt God's existence? Did I refuse to believe God's revelation?
- Did I believe in horoscopes, fortune telling, dreams, good luck charms or reincarnation?
- Did I deny that I was a Catholic? Did I leave the Catholic faith?
- Did I despair of or presume on God's mercy?
- Did I neglect prayer for a long time?
- Did I blaspheme God or take God's name in vain, curse or break an oath or vow?
- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or Holyday of Obligation through my own fault?
- Am I always reverent in the presence of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament?
- Was I inattentive at Mass? Did I come to Mass late? How late? Did I leave Mass early?
- Did I do unnecessary physical work on Sunday?

- Did I disobey or disrespect my parents or legitimate superiors?
- Did I neglect my duties to my husband, wife, children, or parents?
- Did I fail to actively take an interest in the religious education and formation of my children? Have I failed to educate myself on the true teachings of the Church?
- Did I give a full day's work in return for my full day's pay?
- Did I give a fair wage to my employee?
- Did I give scandal by what I said or did, especially to the young? Was I the cause of anyone leaving the faith?
- Was I impatient, angry, envious, unkind, proud, jealous, revengeful, hateful toward others, lazy?
- Did I give bad example, abuse drugs, drink alcohol to excess, fight or quarrel?

Did I physically injure or kill anyone? Have or advise for an abortion? Regarding abortion, check with your priest to see if you were automatically excommunicated. (Canon 1398 states that a person who successfully procures an abortion is automatically excommunicated; also excommunicated are all persons involved in a deliberate and successful effort to bring about an abortion.) An excommunication has to be lifted first, before receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Did I participate in or approve of the grave evil known as "mercy killing"? Did I attempt suicide?

NOTE: In the area of deliberate sexual sins listed below, all are mortal if there is sufficient reflection and full consent of the will.

- Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts and desires? Did I dress immodestly?
- Did I use impure or suggestive words? Tell impure stories? Or listen to them?
- Did I deliberately look at impure things, TV, videos, plays, pictures or movies? Or deliberately read impure material?
- Did I commit an impure act by myself or with another? Which acts?
- Did I marry or advise another to marry outside the church?

- Did I abuse my marriage rights? Was I unfaithful to my marriage vows?
- Have I kept company with someone else's spouse?
- Did I practice artificial birth control or was I or my spouse sterilized?
- Did I steal, cheat, help or encourage others to steal, or keep stolen goods? Have I made restitution for stolen goods?
- Did I fulfill my contracts; give or accept bribes; pay my bills; rashly gamble or speculate; deprive my family of necessities of life?
- Did I tell lies? Deliberately to deceive? Or injure others by lies? Did I commit perjury? Was I uncharitable in word or deed, gossip or reveal others' faults and sins? Fail to keep secrets I should have?
- Did I eat meat on Fridays of Lent or Ash Wednesday?
- Did I fast as required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?
- Did I fail to receive Holy Communion during Easter time? Fail to confess at least once a year?
- Did I go to Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin? Without fasting (water and medicine permitted) for one hour from food and drink?
- Did I make a bad confession?
- Did I fail to contribute to the support of the Church?

Fold this up and keep it in your wallet. Put copies in your church.

Copies of this Guide are available for 10-cents (US) each from the addresses below. Bulk rates available. Call 1-800-549-LIFE for bulk orders. Order the companion piece *This We Believe*, a concise pamphlet that outlines the basic doctrines and prayers every Catholic should know. A great teaching tool at 20-cents (US) each. Bulk rates available. Call or write us for our FREE catalog of pro-life/family books, pamphlets, prayer cards, posters, postcards, audiotapes, videotapes and more!

Human Life International  
4 Family Life  
Front Royal, VA 22630  
540/ 635-7884 Fax: 540/ 636-7363  
E-mail: hli@hli.org

HLI - Canada  
P.O. Box 7400, Station V  
Vanier, ON K1L 8E4 Canada  
613/ 745-9405 Fax: 613/ 745-9868  
E-mail: nstr1281@fox.nstrn.ca



Worldwide Web Site: <http://www.hli.org>  
Copyright © 1992 Human Life International

A  
Practical Guide  
for the  
Sacrament of  
Reconciliation in the  
Third Millennium