STEPS FOR A GOOD CONFESSION

1. Before approaching the Sacrament of Confession, one should spend time in prayer, asking God for the grace of self-knowledge. No growth or advancement in the spiritual life is possible apart from self-knowledge. We must ask for the light of the Holy Spirit that we may see ourselves as God sees us. Through this process, God will illumine our lives and show us the sins we need to confess.

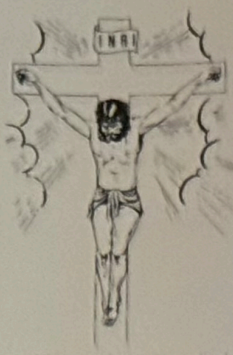
2. Upon discovering our sins, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we need to ask God for the grace of contrition. We should be sorry for having sinned against the august majesty of our All-Holy God. He is, after all, "all good and deserving of all my love."

3. We must now ask God for the grace of amendment. It is not sufficient to be sorry for our sins, but we must also strive, with the help of God, to avoid sin in the future. We must take active measures to guard against sin, which separates us from our loving Father.

4. After we have discovered our sins, asked God for the grace of contrition and amendment, we are then prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of forgiveness in a worthy and efficacious manner. We should confess to the priest as thoroughly as possible, remembering not to omit any serious sins we are conscious of having committed.

5. After we have made a good confession, we should take time to perform our penance and to thank God for the great gifts which we have received in the Sacrament of Penance - forgiveness and peace.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE



"By His wounds, you were healed"
1 Peter 2:24

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How to go to Confession

RECEPTION OF THE PENITENT

The penitent begins by making the Sign of the Cross.

PRIEST & PENITENT: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRIEST: May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and to trust in His mercy.

PENITENT: Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession. These are my sins...

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ACCEPTANCE OF SATISFACTION

The penitent now confesses his/her sins. An idea of the number of times the sin has been committed and any circumstances that affect the nature of the sin should be included. The enclosed examination of conscience will assist you in this process.

The penitent concludes his/her confession as follows:

PENITENT: For these and for any sins that I can't remember at this time, I am truly sorry.

The priest will offer counsel to the penitent and then assign a penance. The penance should be done at the earliest opportunity. The penitent will then be asked by the priest to make an Act of Contrition, either in his/her own words or using the following or a similar prayer.

ACT OF CONTRITION

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 are 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 occasion of sin. Amen.

ABSOLUTION

The priest stretches out his hand(s) toward the penitent and prays the prayer of absolution.

PRIEST: 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.

PENITENT: Amen.

PROCLAMATION OF PRAISE AND DISMISSAL

PRIEST: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

PENITENT: His mercy endures for ever.

PRIEST: The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.

PENITENT: Thanks be to God.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. *I am the Lord your God. You shall have no strange gods before you.*

- Do I give God time every day in prayer?
- Do I seek to love Him with my whole heart?
- Have I been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved in the occult?
- Do I seek to surrender myself to God's Word as taught by the Church?
- Have I ever received Communion in the state of mortal sin?
- Have I ever lied or withheld a mortal sin in Confession?
- Have I doubted or denied an article of the Faith?
- Have I committed a sin with the intention to go to confession later (presumption)?
- Have I profaned, in action or speech, something that is holy?

2. *You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.*

- Have I used God's name in vain, either lightly or carelessly?
- Have I been angry with God?
- Have I spoken irreverently concerning holy matters?
- Have I wished evil upon any other person?

3. *Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.*

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days of obligations?
- Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
- Do I do needless work on Sunday?

4. *Honor your father and mother.*

- Do I honor and obey my parents?
- Have I neglected my duties to my spouse and children?
- Have I taught my children in the ways of the Faith?
- Have I given my family good religious example?
- Do I care for my aged and sick relatives?
- Do I respect and obey those in lawful authority over me?

5. *You shall not kill.*

- Have I harbored hatred in my heart?
- Have I been angry or resentful?
- Have I refused to forgive someone who hurt me?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs?
- Have I physically harmed anyone?
- Have I had an abortion or encouraged someone to have an abortion?
- Have I been sterilized or encouraged others to be?
- Am I gluttonous?

6. *You shall not commit adultery.*

- Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action?
- Have I engaged in any sexual activity outside of marriage?
- Have I used any form of contraception in my marriage?
- Have I been guilty of masturbation?
- Have I sought to control my thoughts?
- Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
- Have I been guilty of any homosexual activity?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words, and actions?
- Am I careful to dress modestly?

7. *You shall not steal.*

- Have I stolen anything?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, or home?
- Have I cheated on school work?
- Do I gamble excessively, depriving my family of their needs?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Have I cheated on my income tax?
- Do I strive to be honest and truthful in all my dealings?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?
- Do I support my parish and give to charities?

8. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

- Have I lied?
- Have I participated in gossip?
- Have I committed the sin of detraction (spoken the truth about a person to someone who had no right to the information)?
- Have I slandered someone's good name?
- Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
- Am I uncharitable, critical or negative in my thoughts of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?
- Have I rashly judged someone's intention?

9. *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.*

- Have I consented to impure thoughts and desires?
- Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, conversation or curiosity?
- Do I seek to control my imagination?
- Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations?

10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.*

- Am I jealous of what other people have?
- Do I envy the families or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life?
- Do I trust that God will care for all my material and spiritual needs?

Conditions for a Mortal Sin

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law... it results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes an exclusion from Christ's Kingdom." (*CCC* # 1855, 1861)

The three conditions for mortal sin are:

1. *Grave matter* – specified by a proper understanding of the Ten Commandments.
2. *Full Knowledge* – one must know the act is considered grave matter.
3. *Deliberate consent* – one must freely choose the act that is gravely wrong.

If all three conditions are satisfied, the person has incurred mortal sin. One who is aware of mortal sin "must not receive Holy Communion, even if he experiences deep contrition, without having first received sacramental absolution, unless he has a grave reason for receiving Holy Communion and there is no possibility for going to confession." (*CCC* # 1457)