**EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

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

* + Do I give God time every day in prayer?
  + Did I deny God’s existence? Did I refuse to believe God’s revelation?
  + Do I seek to love God with my whole heart and put Him first in my daily life?
  + Have I been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved with the occult, i.e. Ouija boards, tarot cards, magic, horoscopes, fortune telling, wicca, spells, divination, New Age beliefs?
  + Do I seek to surrender myself to God's Word as taught by the Church?
  + Have I ever received Communion in a state of mortal sin?
  + Have I ever deliberately told a lie in confession or have I withheld a mortal sin from the priest in confession?
  + Do I make a god out of my work, my possessions, or my image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God?
  + Did I eat meat on the 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 the Easter time? Fail to Confess at least once a year?
* [2] You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
  + Have I used God's name in vain: lightly or carelessly (i.e. Oh my God!)?
  + Did I curse or swear, use foul language or jokes in conversation?
  + Have I wished evil upon another person?
  + Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?
* [3] Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
  + Have I missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?
  + Do I leave Mass early without a good reason?
  + Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
  + Do I do unnecessary work on Sunday?
  + Do I avoid unnecessary shopping on Sundays?
* [4] Honor your Father and your Mother.
* For Children:
  + Do I honor and obey my parents? Do I treat them with love and respect?
  + Do I respect and treat with love my brothers and sisters?
  + Do I respect others with lawful authority?
  + Do I try to bring peace into my home life?
  + Do I blame my parents for my own shortcomings?
* For Parents:
  + Did I fail to actively take an interest in the religious education and formation of my children?
  + Have I given bad example to my children in word or deed?
* [5] You shall not kill.
  + Have I had an abortion or encouraged anyone to have an abortion?
  + Have I ever harmed anyone physically, mentally, or emotionally?
  + Have I lost my temper, given into anger or harbored resentment against my neighbor?
  + Do I bear grudges?
  + Have I mutilated myself in any way?
  + Am I overcritical of myself or others?
  + Have I given a bad example and caused scandal?
  + Have I thought about or attempted suicide?
  + Do I abuse my body by using drugs, getting drunk, overeating, under eating, not exercising, or exercising too much (to extremes)?
  + Do I take care of the environment?
* [6] You shall not commit adultery.
  + Have I had sex or participated in other sexual activity (foreplay, lustful kissing or sexual touching, etc.) outside of marriage?
  + Have I masturbated?
  + Have I consented to/entertained lustful thoughts?
  + Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I thought of other people as objects?
  + Have I engaged in homosexual activity?
  + Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words and actions?
  + Have I dressed immodestly?
  + Have I looked at pornography or watched movies/TV/listened to music that was sexual in content?
  + Do I avoid laziness, gluttony, idleness and the occasions of impurity?
* For Married People:
  + 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?
  + Have I committed adultery?
  + Did I use contraception or was I or my spouse sterilized?
* [7] You shall not steal.
  + Have I stolen anything?
  + Do I always give a full day’s work for a full day’s pay?
  + Do I cheat in school or in business?
  + Am I fair in paying my employees?
  + Am I honest in paying my taxes?
  + Did I fulfill my contracts; give or accept bribes; pay my bills; rashly gamble or speculate; deprive my family of necessities of life?
  + Do I waste time at work, school or at home?
  + Have I been extravagant in my manner of life?
  + Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?
  + Did I neglect my duty to provide for the material needs of the Church?
* [8] You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
  + 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 fault and sins? Fail to keep secrets I should have?
  + In any of my previous confessions did I lie or deliberately conceal something from the priest?
  + Have I been prejudiced or discriminated against anyone?
* [9] You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
  + Do I pray at once to banish impure thoughts and temptations? Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, conversations or curiosity?
  + Have I been unfaithful to my spouse in either my actions or my thoughts?
  + Have I used my husband or wife merely to satisfy my sexual urges?
  + Have I acted inappropriately with those of the opposite sex?
  + Do I seek to control my imagination?
* [10] You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.
  + Am I jealous of what other people have?
  + Do I envy the families, possessions, status or looks of others?
  + Am I greedy or selfish?
  + Are material possessions the purpose of my life?
  + Do I habitually compare myself with others?
  + Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?
  + Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the treasures of Heaven?

## The Precepts of the Church

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.

We must “sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord” (Sunday), as well as the principal feast days, known as [Catholic holy days of obligation](http://www.beginningcatholic.com/catholic-holy-days-of-obligation). This requires attending Mass, “and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.”

1. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.

We must prepare for the Eucharist by means of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). This sacrament “continues Baptism’s work of conversion and forgiveness.”

1. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.

This “guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord’s Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.”

1. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.

“The fourth precept ensures the times of ascesis and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.” See below for more about fasting & abstinence.

1. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

“The fifth precept means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.”

**Here’s a bit about why the Catholic Church teaches what it does about Confession** (taken from: http://www.saintaquinas.com/confess\_essay.html):

In the end, it is the divinely ordained teaching authority of the Church that assures me of the validity and necessity of the Christian Sacraments; especially that of Confession. The sacrament of reconciliation (confession), the Church teaches, is the normative, necessary means by which a Christian receives the forgiveness of God. The efficacy of confession is derived from Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, where he served as the divine substitute for our transgressions. Not only does the Church teach the need of regular confession, but the Bible also records Christ’s institution of the sacrament following his resurrection from the dead when he first appeared to the assembly of apostles (John 20:19-23):

*On the evening of the first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”*

*-Why would Jesus tell them that what they forgive will be forgiven if He didn’t expect people to tell the priest their sins?*

This moment, when Jesus breathed on his apostles, constituted both the institution of the Catholic ministerial priesthood and the sacrament of confession. Christ gave his first priests, the apostles, the authority to forgive and retain sins. It was his intention that all sin be forgiven though the Church by aural confession of sins to the priests. We should realize that in Holy Scripture God breathed on man only twice: once when he breathed life into the clay of earth to create man (Genesis 2:7) and the second time when he breathed the life of grace into his Church. Both instances were that of an intimate, riveting moment between God and man. It is clear that the ability to forgive and retain sin given to the apostles, requires that each of us (even to this day)  confess our sins to the priests of the Church so that our sins can be forgiven or retained.

***Here’s what is required in order to make a good and valid Confession:***

* Pray to The Holy Spirit and ask His help to make a good examination of conscience and Confession. Then *examine your conscience thoroughly*.
* Examination of Conscience (use a written examination of conscience (in this booklet) to help you—also include sins that may not be listed but are pressing on your heart. If you need to, make a list of these sins so you remember them when you are in there. After Confession burn the list or tear it up and throw it out as the symbolic gesture of what truly happens in Confession—your sins are completely wiped away!
* True Contrition, also known as Sorrow for sins. Desire to make up for your sin and change your ways.
* Confess all your sins to the priest out loud—especially any serious sins, but venial ones too. Remember all serious sins that you remember must be confessed in order for the sacrament to be valid—it is a mortal sin to purposefully leave out a serious sin from Confession.
* Do the prescribed penance given by the priest to complete the Sacrament (do it as soon as possible, once you leave the confessional, so you don’t forget).

**A good prayer for before Confession:**

Oh most merciful God! Closely at Your feet, I implore Your forgiveness. I sincerely desire to leave all my evil ways and to confess my sins with all sincerity to You and to Your priest. I am a sinner, have mercy on me, Oh Lord. Give a lively faith and a firm hope in the Passion of my Redeemer. Give me, for your mercy’s sake, a sorrow for having offended so good a God. Mary, my mother, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may make a good Confession. Come, Holy Spirit and help me to examine my conscience thoroughly and be truly sorry for my sins. Amen.

**A good prayer for after Confession:**

Almighty and most merciful God, I give You thanks with all the powers of my soul for this and all other mercies, graces, and blessings bestowed on me, and prostrating myself at Your Sacred Feet, I offer myself to be henceforth forever Yours. Let nothing in life or death ever separate me from You! I renounce with my whole soul all my treasons against You, and all the abominations and sins of my past life. I renew my promises made in baptism, and from this moment I dedicate myself eternally to Your love and service, Jesus, my Lord. Grant that for the time to come, I may detest sin more than death itself, and avoid all such occasions and companies as have unhappily brought me to it. This I resolve to do by aid of Your divine grace, without which I can do nothing. Amen.

**How exactly does it work once I’m in “the box”?**

Here is the “process” or “how to” of Confession. If you are unsure, just ask the priest-—he will walk you through it. It’s about the intention of your heart not the memorization of the format. So don’t worry about getting the format perfect; it’s far more important to just come with an open, humble, truly repentant heart, not a memorized format.

First, you can choose whether you go face to face or anonymously. Both are totally acceptable choices. Just remember don’t fear going face to face. A lot of grace can come from facing that fear and seeing that the priest is not shocked and appalled but humbled by your confession. He receives you with the love of Christ. (Priests have heard it all. There is nothing you can say that will shock them, and they can never reveal what you tell them in the Confessional to anyone ever).

**Next follow these steps and/or ask the priest to guide you through it…**

1. **Make the sign of the Cross**

The priest may welcome you and also share a passage of Scripture with you.   
If he does not, begin this way -

Penitent: Bless me Father for I have sinned.

Priest: May grace, mercy and peace be with you from God your Father and Jesus Christ your Savior

Penitent: Amen

1. **Tell the Priest how long it has been since your last confession**

“Father, it has been \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (years, months, weeks or so long that I don’t remember) since my last confession.”

3. **Confess your sins and talk to Father about how you can be a better Christian**

4. **The Priest will give some advice and an act of Penance**

Father will give you a penance; something you can do in order to help you make up for your sins and help you focus on an area of importance in your life.

1. **Father will then ask you to express your sorrow with an ACT OF CONTRITION**

**Act of Contrition:**

OPTION A

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.

OPTION B

O, my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. I detest all my sins because of your just punishment, 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](http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=10849) no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.

Or make your own that hits on the fact that you are truly sorry and will seek to change your ways with God’s help.

1. **Father then pronounces God's forgiveness and gives you ABSOLUTION**

Priest: " God, 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. Thank you, Father.

1. **The dismissal follows.**

Priest: Go in the peace of Christ. (Or similar words)

Penitent: Thanks be to God.