Guide to First Confession

Make a Good Examination of Conscience
Read the “Suggestions for a Good Examination of Conscience” on the other side of this sheet.

Confess Your Sins to the Priest
Go into the confessional. You have the choice to kneel at the screen or sit to talk face-to-face with the priest. The priest should welcome you kindly and warmly.

Make the Sign of the Cross, and say these words:

   Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.
   This is my first confession.
   These are my sins...

Tell all your sins openly and honestly, including the number of times each sin was committed. Then, listen to the priest and follow his instructions. You may also ask any questions about the faith or how to grow in holiness. Pray the Act of Contrition when the priest tells you.

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God,
I am heartily sorry for having offended You,
and I detest all my sins,
because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell;
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 confess my sins,
to do penance,
and to amend my life.
Amen.

The priest will ask you to do a “penance,” usually some prayers, to show you are truly sorry for your sins. This is done after you return to your pew. If the priest assigns a good act, it should be done soon after you leave the church.

Then the priest, acting in the person of Jesus Christ, will absolve (forgive) you of your sins with the following words:

   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 of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Make the Sign of the Cross, and say:

   Amen.

Do the Act of Penance
After you return to your pew, do the act of penance the priest assigns you. Tell God that you are thankful for the grace of reconciliation that you have just received.

Adapted from “A Reconciliation Pocket Guide”, from the Knights of Columbus, and “ABCs of Confession” from St. Mary of the Angels.
Suggestions for a Good Examination of Conscience

Recall Your Sins
Pray to the Holy Spirit for self-knowledge and trust in the mercy of God. Take a few minutes to think about what you have done against God’s commandments. Read the suggestions below for each commandment.

First Commandment: I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.
- Do I love God with all my heart and with all my soul and all my strength?
- Do I put anything or anyone above God?
- Do I pray to God every day?

Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- Did I curse or swear, or use bad language?
- Did I use God’s name in vain: lightly or carelessly or with a lack of respect?

Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays or holy days through my own fault, or were late to Mass without a good reason?
- Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest, and relaxation, avoiding unnecessary work?

Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother.
- Do I honor and respect my parents?
- Did I disobey my parents or teachers?
- Have I talked back or failed to help at home?

Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.
- Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge?
- Did I fight with or hurt someone?
- Did I refuse to forgive someone?

Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.
- Have I used foul language or told impure jokes?
- Did I willfully watch indecent TV shows, movies, or read bad books, magazines or internet pages?
- Do I dress and behave modestly?

Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.
- Did I steal or damage another’s property?
- Did I cheat on tests or quizzes, or cheat anyone of what I owe?
- Have I pirated videos, music or software?

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- Have I lied or gossiped or told secrets?
- Have I ruined the good name of others by spreading lies or bad information about them?
- Do I always tell the truth, and am I sincere in all that I do?

Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
- Do I fail to control my imagination?
- Have I allowed impure thoughts?
- Do I try to think of holy and pure things?

Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.
- Am I jealous or envious of what others have?
- Is my heart greedy or want things that are not really needed?
- Am I grateful or the gifts that God has given to me?

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