

A Sample Examination of Conscience before Confession

Reflect on what your behaviors and attitudes are that are moving you away from your relationship with God.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Matthew 22:37

Is God the center of my life? Are there any "false gods" in my life that replace God as my chief concern in all I do: for example, money, work, pleasure, superstition?

How strong is my faith in God? Am I trying to grow in my understanding of Jesus' message and of the teachings of the Church? Is there any aspect of the Church's teachings that troubles me or that I ignore?

Do I honor God especially on Sunday and holy days? Do I participate in earnest at Mass or do I just watch uninvolved? Do I pray frequently, or are all my prayers just routine? Do I share in the sacrament of Reconciliation with any regularity and receive Communion regularly?

Do I reverence the name of God? Have I sworn false oaths, blasphemed or taken God's name in vain? Am I careless with God's name?

You shall love your neighbor

as yourself. Matthew 22:39

Am I a loving person to all I meet? Do I treat others as I would wish to be treated? Do I ever "use" people to achieve what I want or to get ahead? Am I holding a grudge or harboring a feeling of hate toward anyone?

Do I show concern for others, or are my time and efforts concentrated just on myself? Do I give my time and/or possessions to those less fortunate? Do I show respect to all persons, no matter their sex, age, race, religion, social or economic status?

Do I value human life? Do I uphold the rights of the unborn, of children, of the elderly, of those who are physically or mentally disabled?

Within my family do I show respect to all? Do I try to listen and respond to the concerns of my family members? As a spouse, am I faithful and supportive of my husband or wife?

As a parent, do I guide my children in the Catholic way of life and give them good example? As a daughter or son, am I respectful toward my parents and considerate of the respect I owe them? As a brother or sister, am I a friend to the other children in the family and am I generous with them?

Do I tell the truth? Am I fair in my judgments and actions? Do I gossip about people? Do I speak evil of others? Do I respect and protect the property of others? Am I jealous of what others do and have? Do I steal?

In the workplace, am I honest? Do I do all that I am expected to do and spend the required time on the job? Am I considerate of my co-workers? Do I offer my help when asked? If I am in a leadership position, do I use my authority for the good of all and in a spirit of service, or do I grasp for power and abuse my authority over others?

As a citizen, am I concerned about the nation's laws with respect to justice, human dignity and the environment? Do I keep the law? Do I pay my taxes? Do I take seriously my civic responsibility to vote? Do I extend any energy to help my local neighborhood and city to be responsive to the legitimate needs of my fellow citizens?

Do I consciously attempt to be a model of living my Catholic faith? Do I give bad example of Catholic faith life? Do I contribute my time and my finances to the Church parish? Do I pray for the Church and our Church leaders that they may be

faithful to the mission of Christ Jesus?

So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love as Christ loved us.... Ephesians 5:1-2

Do I make fruitful use of my gifts and my time? Am I lazy in carrying out my responsibilities? Do I look with the eyes of faith at the sorrows and disappointments of life?

Do I regard my body and the bodies of others as temples of the Holy Spirit? Am I chaste? Am I guilty of sexual intercourse before marriage; of adultery while married or with a married person; of masturbation? Of pornography? Of thoughts and actions unworthy of the purity to which God calls me? Have I encouraged others to sin in this regard?

Have I been abusive with alcohol or other drugs? Have I driven after I have been drinking alcohol? Have I overeaten? Am I greedy? Have I gone to places on the Internet that are harmful to my spiritual or emotional life?

Am I faithful to my conscience?

What about my life or my behavior am I avoiding bringing before God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

How Do I Go To Confession

A time of brief preparation is important. Ask God in a short prayer for help, repentance, strength and light. If you can, read a brief passage from the Bible and think about your life. What choices are you making that are moving you away from the Lord? If available,

use an examination of conscience for your reflection. Go to the Reconciliation Room or Confessional area in your Church, and choose to confess either face-to-face with the priest or anonymously. Here are the usual steps:

1. As the priest welcomes you, make the sign of the cross with him.
2. Say "Amen" if he says a prayer for you.
3. The priest may read a passage from Scripture, recite from memory a scriptural passage or invite you to read from the Bible.
4. You may begin your confession with the words: Bless (forgive) me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (what period of time) _____ since my last Confession. These are my sins.
5. Confess your sins. Simply speak of what brings you to ask for God's forgiveness.
6. The priest may discuss your spiritual situation if that seems helpful.
7. Accept the penance offered to you by the priest. It may be a prayer, a work of charity or another action which will help you be free of your sin.
8. You will be invited by the priest to express your sorrow. You can use an Act of Contrition that you either read, recite from memory or express in your own words.
An Act of Contrition: *"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. And I detest all my sins because of your just punishments. 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 no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen."*
9. The priest will offer this 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 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."
Say "Amen" when he concludes this prayer.
10. The priest may add: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is Good," to which you respond: "His mercy endures forever."
11. As the priest bids you good-bye conclude with "Thank you" or "Thanks be to God." Then, later spend a few moments in prayerful reflection in gratitude for God's loving mercy.