

engage in superstitious practices: palm-reading, fortune telling, etc.?

- Did I take the name of God in vain? Did I curse, or take a false oath?
- Did I miss Mass on Sundays or holy days of obligation through my own fault, without any serious reason? Did I keep fast and abstinence on the prescribed days?
- Did I disobey my parents and lawful superiors in important matters?
- Did I hate or quarrel with anyone, or desire revenge? Did I refuse to forgive? Did I hurt or cause to kill someone? Did I get drunk? Did I take illicit drugs? Did I consent to, recommend, advise or actively take part in an abortion?
- Did I willfully look at indecent pictures or watch immoral movies? Did I read immoral books or magazines? Did I engage in impure jokes or conversations? Did I willfully entertain impure thoughts or feelings? Did I commit impure acts, alone or with others? Did I take contraceptive or abortifacient pills or use other artificial means in order to prevent conception?
- Did I steal or damage another's property? How much? Have I made reparation for the damages done? Have I been dishonest in my business relations?
- Did I tell lies? Did I sin by calumny, or detraction telling the unknown grave faults of others without necessity, even if they are true? Did I judge others rashly in serious matters? Have I tried to make restitution for the bad reputation I caused?

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If you remember other serious sins besides those indicated here, mention them in your Confession.

Before Confession

Be truly sorry for your sins. "The essential act of Penance, on the part of the penitent, is contrition, a clear and decisive rejection of the sin committed, together with a resolution not to commit it again, out of the love one has for God and which is reborn with repentance.

Understood in this way, *contrition* is therefore the beginning and the heart of *conversion*, of that evangelical *metánoia* which brings the person back to God like the Prodigal Son returning to his father, and which has in the sacrament of Penance its visible sign and which perfects attrition."^{*}

The *resolution to avoid committing these sins in the future* (amendment) is a sure sign that your sorrow is genuine and authentic.

This does not mean that a promise never to fall again into sin is necessary. A resolution to try to avoid the near occasions of sin suffices for true repentance. God's grace in cooperation with the intention to rectify your life will give you the strength to resist and overcome temptation in the future.

^{*} John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Pœnitentia*, n. 31. 1983.

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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.

You may now go to Confession.

During Confession

- You can begin your confession by making the sign of the cross and greeting the priest: "**Bless me father, for I have sinned.**"
- The priest gives you a blessing and you may respond by reciting the words St. Peter said to Christ: "**Lord you know all things; you know that I love you.**" You may continue with the time since your last confession: "**My last good confession was . . .** (how many weeks, months or years approximately)."
- *Say the sins that you remember.* Start with the one that is most difficult to say, after this it will be easier to mention the rest. If you received general absolution, tell this and the sins forgiven then to the priest.

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- If you do not know how to confess, feel uneasy or ashamed, simply ask the priest to assist you. Be assured he will help you make a good confession. Simply answer the questions without hiding anything out of shame or fear. Place your trust in God: he is your merciful Father and wants to forgive you.
- If you do not remember any serious sins, be sure to confess at least some of your venial sins, adding at the end: **“I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life, especially for . . . (mention in general any past sin for which you are particularly sorry, for example all my sins against charity, purity, etc.).”**
- The priest will assign you some penance and give you some advice to help you to be a better Christian.
- Listen to the words of the absolution attentively. At the end answer: **“Amen.”** Be willing to do the penance as soon as possible. This *penance* will diminish the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

After Confession

Give thanks to God for forgiving you again. If you recall some serious sin you forgot to tell, rest assured that it has been forgiven with the others, but be sure to confess it in your next Confession.

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Rite of Reconciliation

After the customary greetings, the penitent crosses himself as the priest says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The penitent answers: **Amen.**

The priest may say:

May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess your sins with true sorrow.

Either the priest or the penitent may read or say by heart some words taken from the Holy Scripture about the mercy of God and repentance, e.g.:

Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.

The penitent accuses himself of his sins. The priest gives the opportune advice, imposes the penance on him, and invites the penitent to manifest his contrition. The penitent may say for example:

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The priest gives him the 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.

The penitent answers: **Amen.**

The priest dismisses the penitent with this or any other formulae:

May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

The penitent should fulfill the penance imposed.

MIDWEST THEOLOGICAL FORUM

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————— With ecclesiastical approval —————

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SHORT GUIDE FOR CONFESSION

By James Socías

The basic requirement for a good Confession is to have the intention of returning to God like the “prodigal son” and to acknowledge our sins with true sorrow before his representative, the priest.

*“To those who have been far away from the sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love I make this appeal: come back to this source of grace; do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you. He will heal you, and you will be at peace with God!”**

Examination of Conscience

Recall your sins. Calmly ask yourself what you have done with full knowledge and full consent against God’s and the Church’s Commandments.

- When was my last good Confession? Did I receive Communion or other sacraments in the state of mortal sin? Did I intentionally fail to confess some mortal sin in my previous Confession?
- Did I seriously doubt my faith or put myself in danger of losing my faith through readings hostile to Catholic teachings or involvement in non-Catholic sects? Did I

* Homily of Pope John Paul II on September 13, 1987, at Westover Hills, San Antonio, Texas.

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