



Reconciliation

Examination of Conscience

Confession

Contrition

Absolution

Reconciliation

A GUIDE TO CONFESSION

(take this with you ... it's really okay)



BEFORE YOU GO

Examine your conscience, that is, reflect on what sins you've committed. To guide you, just Google "examination of conscience" and you'll find resources to help you. It's even all right to make a list to bring with you if that helps.



INTRODUCTION

When you come before the priest, begin by making the Sign of the Cross (praying the words out loud), and continue by saying, "Bless me, Father, I have sinned. It has been (how long) since my last confession. These are my sins..."



CONFESSION

List the sins you've committed that came to mind during your examination of conscience. Don't be too general ("I haven't been a good person"), but a lot of detail isn't necessary (you don't need to tell the whole story of how a sin came about). If you're not sure if something is a sin, ask the priest. This isn't counseling, so unless you ask, the priest likely won't give you advice. He'll just move on to ...



PENANCE

The priest will suggest something for you to do or pray as a response to God's mercy. You'll have to remember what this is and do it after the confession is over, so pay attention.



ACT OF CONTRITION

The priest will then ask you to pray out loud your "Act of Contrition," to demonstrate your sorrow for your sins: "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."



ABSOLUTION

Don't get up to leave after that prayer, because the best part is yet to come: The priest will extend his hands in your direction and he will pray the 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 grant 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. Amen." You respond: "Amen."



CONCLUSION

The priest will then likely say something like, "God has freed you from your sin. Go in Peace." To which you can respond: "Thanks be to God." Don't forget to do your penance. If it is saying certain prayers, it's best to do it right away in the church before you forget.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE BASED ON THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:3–11

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What are my priorities?

Do I focus too much on the things of this earth?

Do I share my gifts, talents, time, and treasure to help build the kingdom of God here on earth?

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Do I take the time for prayer, calling out to God in my need?

Do I, in turn, try to assist those who are suffering?

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Do I ever look down on others because they may not look or act like me?

Do I treat other people fairly—at work, at school, at home?

Do I think that I have all the answers?

Are my close relationships nurtured by mutual respect?

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

When I see or hear stories of people suffering injustice, what is my response?

Do the places where I allocate my money reflect a thirst for justice?

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

When I am wronged, am I willing to forgive?

Am I currently holding any grudges against anyone?

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Do I respect the gift of my body, created in God's image?

When I hear a dirty or racist joke, do I turn away?

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Do I work for peace in my community, neighborhood, and family?

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

If a conversation about religion begins in the workplace or a social event, am I willing to add my own concerns, based on my Catholic faith, to that conversation?

Am I willing to take a stand that is unpopular, but is based on gospel values?

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

Am I willing to forgive others when they speak about me harshly?

Is my life on this earth focused on the life to come?

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE BASED ON MATTHEW 25: 31–46

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, we hear the familiar story of the separation of the sheep from the goats at the end of time. The Lord Jesus grants eternal life to those who, by the way they lived their lives, extended charity and justice to those in need. For those who ignored the needs of others, eternal punishment was their inheritance. Let us ponder these words as we ask God for mercy. Let us also pray for a change of heart.

“I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.”

Have I shared out of my own gifts to help others?

Have I given in to our society's seemingly endless appetite for possessions?

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

What is my attitude toward those who may be of a different race, religious expression, or social status?

Am I a person who practices Christian hospitality?

When I encounter a stranger, do I offer a warm welcome?

“I was naked and you gave me clothing.”

What is my attitude toward the poor?

Have I taken a real inventory of the clothes I own, in order to share with those who are in need?

Am I overly concerned with the way I am dressed, while others struggle with the little clothing they have to keep them warm and safe from the elements?

“I was sick and you took care of me.”

When a friend or neighbor is ill, do I reach out with comfort and concern?

Am I too concerned with my own needs to see the needs of those who may be sick in body, mind, or spirit?

Am I willing to share my own faith with one who lacks faith?

“I was in prison and you visited me.”

When I meet someone who is imprisoned in worlds of addiction, do I offer help and consolation?

When I myself am imprisoned by my own sin, do I seek the forgiveness of God through the celebration of the sacraments?



