How to Make a Confession

Most souls want the love and joy and peace which come from Absolution, but they lack practical instruction as to how to prepare themselves. Here is a very simple way in which to prepare for a confession.

1. Go to a place where you can be alone for an hour. A church is the best place. But it is essential that you be quiet and alone with God. For the first few minutes, think about God. Try to realize how much He loves you and the pain He suffered on the Cross in order to redeem you.

2. Now consider your life. What a failure it has been in many ways; how different from the life of Jesus! Tell him that you are sorry for your sins and that you are resolved to face them all and cleanse yourself of their stain.

3. Think, now, of some of the chief faults of your life; the sins (some of them perhaps as far back as your childhood) of which you are especially ashamed. Take a sheet of paper and note down the sins you can recall. But remember the great difference between temptation and sin.

Temptation is the impulse to think, to say, or to do that which is wrong; but when you overcome the impulse, there is no sin. A sin is surrender to the impulse.

4. After—but only after—you have noted down all the sins you can recall, it may help you to check up on your list by referring to the Examination of Conscience that follows. (But get everything noted down on paper, for it will save time for others who may be waiting if you can read the sins off readily in your confession. A form for the Confession will be found at the end of this paper.)

5. If possible, state how many times you have committed each sin, or at all events the greater ones. If you cannot remember the number of times, at least say you have committed the sin often.

Examination of Conscience

I. Pride

This is the root of sin; we have all in committed it in many ways

Have you loved God as much as you ought to do?
Have you been more interested in self than in God?
Have you made it your chief aim to always be on top?
What have you been vain about: personal appearance, clothes, personality, possessions, family, abilities, or success in games or in studies?
Have you scorned other people for their misfortunes, their sins, their religion, stupidity, or other weaknesses?
Have you talked too much or called attention to yourself?
Been sorry for yourself, self-pitying?
Refused to admit when you were wrong?
Refused to apologize? Been resentful or suspicious of others through over-sensitiveness? Have you been stubborn and self-willed? In what ways?

II. Idolatry

Have you put another person before God’s law; by not going to church, or by committing some other sin to please that person?
Have you wanted popularity so much that you have not said your prayers, or done some other good things, for fear of being laughed at?
Have you loved money or clothes too much; or even sinned to get them?
Have you gone to mediums or attended “spiritualistic” meetings?

III. Profanity

Have you sworn? Especially, have you misused the name of Jesus?
Have you given way to anxiety, instead of turning to God for help? Have you been worried, afraid, or allowed yourself to get into a panic?
Have you allowed yourself to feel that it was impossible even for God to help you?

IV. Irreverence

Have you missed Mass on Sunday, when you could have gone? Have you failed to say your prayers morning and night, or to say them earnestly?
Have you always kept Sunday as it ought to be kept? Have you done some unnecessary work on Sunday?
Have you always tried to worship God when in Church, or have you sometimes been irreverent, or joked about holy things? (Remember that it is not a sin if you honestly forgot to say your prayers. It was only a sin if you neglected it through laziness or fear of being laughed at.)
Have you been ashamed of your religion, or ashamed at Jesus?

V. Disobedience

As a child, were you always as loving and respectful to your father or mother as you ought to have been? Have you been grateful enough for all that they did for you?
Did you ever disobey them or others who were over you; or did you ever obey them slowly and reluctantly? Have your actions ever caused them anxiety or shame?
Have you ever deliberately disobeyed God or ignored His desired for you? In what way?
Have you ever shown disregard for the laws of the Church? For the laws of the land?
Have you contributed as much as you ought to have done to the support or the happiness of your parents?
What sins have you regarded to your wife/husband, children, or other members of your family?
Have you given as much care and attention as possible to the religious life of your family; for example, with regard to Grace at meals, Family Prayers, Church-going, etc.?
Have you seen that your children had adequate and continuous religious instruction?
Have you been just and generous to people in your employment, or under your authority in business? In what ways have you failed?
Have you tried to dominate the lives of others unduly? How?
VI. HATE
Have you killed anyone, either in outward deed, or in your heart? Have you wished that someone was dead? Have you ever cursed people?

Have you been angry unjustly, struck people, or hurt them by ridicule or contempt? Have you gossiped about people? Is there anyone whom you now hold a grudge against or are unwilling to forgive? (Think how often God has forgiven you, and ask Him to help you to forgive and love your enemies for His sake.)

Have you refused to help people who were in real need of help? Have you ignored the sick or the poor? Have you neglected to be friendly with people, especially with those who are not very popular? Have you ever taught or tempted another person to sin?

VII. IMPURITY
These are the hardest things to confess, because we are so ashamed of them. But God will give you the courage to show them all plainly, if you ask him. Do not be afraid that the Priest will be shocked. He will not be. Remember that it is better not to make your confession at all than to hide a single sin.

Have you been impure in thought, word or deed? You need not talk much about it, but make it quite plain to the Priest just what kinds of sin you mean, whether they were done alone, or with a man or a woman; and if possible, how often.

Have you looked at evil pictures? Have you read bad passages in books?

Have you been immodest in actions or in dress?
Have you been lazy in prayers, work, or study?
Have you neglected business, family, or social duties? Have you ever eaten, drunk, or smoked more than was good for you? Have you neglected the days of fasting and abstinence? Have you broken rules or resolutions which you have made for yourself?

Have you allowed yourself to become over-engrossed in light reading, movies, radio, television, or other pastimes, to the exclusion of worthwhile things?

Have you been cowardly in sickness or in pain?
Have you been mindful of the suffering of the world?

VIII. THEFT
Have you ever stolen anything, either as a child or more recently? What things? Have you shared in stolen goods?

Have you cheated in business, games, or lessons?
Have you been over-extravagant; have you gambled or bet too much?

Have you tried hard to pay all of your debts, or have you contracted debts unnecessarily?

Have you remembered that God has given you all you have? Have you thanked Him enough? Have you given as much as you ought to the Church or to charities? Have you been stingy? Have you wasted time?

IX. DECEIT
How many lies have you told?

Have you exaggerated too much? Have you been deceitful, unfair, or a hypocrite?

Have you allowed others to receive blame for your faults?

Have you been harsh toward others, or in speaking of others, for sins which you also have committed?

X. DISCONTENT
Have you been jealous of others, because they had more things, or more money, or because they were better looking or more successful, or because someone loves them more than you?

Have you been grieved at the prosperity or attainments of others?

Have you been dejected because of the position, talents, or fortune of others?

Have you been glad when they failed or were in trouble, or were you glad when you heard people speak ill of them?

Have you allowed yourself to be sad and discouraged at times, and not always fought to be brave and joyful?

Have you tried to accept loss or sorrow or hard things at the hand of God?

Have you thought that God does not love you?

Have you ever given up trying to be good?

1. After you have noted all your sins that you could remember, ask God to forgive you, and promise Him that you will try not to sin again.

2. Do not be afraid lest you have forgotten something. If you have done your best, that is all God asks.

3. Now, ask the Priest, if you have not already done so, when you may come for your confession.

4. Do not worry if you do not know how to make your confession. The Priest will show you easily.

5. If, when you made your confession before, you ever held back a sin, be sure to tell this in your confession. Then, at last, your heart will be right with God.

FORM OF CONFESSION
Kneel down, make the sign of the Cross and say:

Bless me Father for I have sinned.

The Priest shall bless you.

Then say this:

I confess to God Almighty; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault.

And especially I remember these sins, since my last confession ________ Tell the Priest when you made your last confession unless, of course, this is your first one. Then read the sins you have written on your paper.

When you have finished reading your sins, say:

For these and all my other sins, which I cannot now remember, I am very sorry, I promise to do better, I beg God to forgive me, and you Father, to give me penance, advice, and absolution.

Now the Priest will speak to you and give you God’s blessing and forgiveness. He will also tell you some prayer to say, or something to do, as a penance and thank offering to God.

Afterward, go back to your place in the Church and say the prayer the Priest has given you. Then thank God with all your heart, and depart determined to fight harder than ever before.