

A Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation

How to make a good confession



Preparation: Take time for prayer and reflection. Using an examination of conscience, recall the sins committed since your last confession.



Greeting: Enter the confessional. After being welcomed by the priest, make the sign of the cross saying: *“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*



Confession: Tell the priest when you last went to confession, saying: *“Bless me father, for I have sinned. It has been ____ (weeks/months/years) since my last confession. These are my sins:”* Then confess your sins.



Penance: Listen to any advice the priest may give and accept a penance (this might be a prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity) from him. If you are confused by anything the priest says, ask him for clarification.



Act of Contrition: The priest will ask you to say an Act of Contrition (where you express sorrow for sin, resolve to change your life, and ask for God’s mercy). Below is one version of this prayer.

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: The priest will then pray the words of absolution and extend the peace of Christ. As you listen to the prayer, you make the sign of the cross with the priest. You respond: *“Amen”* and the priest will dismiss you.

Examination of Conscience

I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me

Did I fail to love God, to make God first in my life, to thank Him, trust Him, love Him as He deserves? Did I fail to pray? Have I denied my faith? Have I been rebellious toward God and his commands? Do I make a god out of my work, my possessions or my image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God? Have I put my phone or other technology before my relationship with God, friends or family? Am I angry toward God because of illness or misfortune? Have I participated in any superstitions?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

Have I misused the name of God by swearing and cursing? Have I used foul language? In conversation, have I passively listened to slander demeaning to the Church, or God’s authority?

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy

Have I missed Mass on Sunday or holy days of obligation through my own fault? Do I arrive at church late or leave early due to carelessness or without serious reason? Do I participate in the Mass or do I daydream?

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Honor your father and mother

Have I been rebellious, disobedient, or disrespectful to my parents, teachers and those in authority over me? Have I lied or deceived my parents? Have I been arrogant and stubborn? Have I talked back to my parents or those in authority?

You shall not kill

Have I gotten angry, or nurtured and held grudges and resentments? Have I refused to forgive others? Have I cultivated hatred? Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have one? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I put others in danger by using my phone while driving?

You shall not commit adultery

Do I value and respect my sexuality? Have I watched pornography either on the internet or through some other media? Have I led myself or others to sin by using technology inappropriately? Have I masturbated? Have I lustfully kissed or sexually touched someone? Have I had sexual intercourse?

You shall not steal

Have I lied? Have I stolen anything? Have I cheated on tests or homework? Do I share what I have generously with those in need?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

Have I gossiped about others? Have I told lies about others? Have I talked about another person behind their back? Have I mocked or made fun of others? Did I reveal secrets that should have been kept confidential? Have I condoned prejudice and hatred toward people of other nationalities, race or religions?

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife

Have I looked at others lustfully? Have I freely and deliberately entertained impure thoughts? Have I encouraged these thoughts by stares, curiosity, or impure conversations? Did I neglect to control my imagination or impure desires?

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods

Have I been selfish or spiteful toward others? Have I been jealous? Do I habitually compare myself with others? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the treasures of heaven?

To find times when the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available at a parish near you, please visit:

www.arlingtondiocese.org/parish-finder