

# BASILICA *of the* NATIONAL SHRINE *of the* IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

*America's Catholic Church*

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## AN AID FOR BETTER RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

### ELEMENTS OF MAKING A SINCERE CONFESSION

1. Thoroughly examine your conscience for sins you have committed since your last confession (an examination of conscience).
2. Inform the priest of the approximate length of time since your last confession and your basic vocation in life (i.e. single, married, widowed, etc.), as this helps him place your sins in some context.
3. Name, as best as possible, all very serious sins (mortal sins), with some indication of their frequency. Also name the less serious sins (venial sins), though you may be more general for the sake of brevity.
4. In order to receive absolution, you must have a sincere desire to reject the sinful behaviors confessed and respond willingly to God's grace by resolving to avoid all future sin and occasions of sin.



## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*Below are suggestions for examining your conscience in preparation for a fruitful confession. This examination focuses on the Ten Commandments and gives examples of the kinds of sins that tend to be committed against each Commandment.*

### **I. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have false gods before me.**

- Have I rejected God's revelation as it comes to me through the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church?
- Have I sought money, power, sexuality, or any other lesser good as if it was the supreme good?
- Have I despaired of God's help? Have I taken for granted God's mercy?
- Have I placed faith in superstition?

### **II. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

- Have I disrespected the holiness of God or of things or persons dedicated to God?
- Have I lied under oath or failed to keep vows made in God's sight?

### **III. You shall keep holy the Sabbath day.**

- Have I failed, through my own fault, to worship God by attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I kept Sunday holy by using it as a day for recreation with family and friends, for charitable activity, and for extra prayer? Have I rested sufficiently to renew me for the work that awaits in the coming week?

### **IV. You shall honor your father and your mother.**

- Have I fulfilled my obligations toward my parents, especially in their advancing years?
- Have I been respectfully obedient to those who are legitimate authorities over me?

### **V. You shall not kill.**

- Have I contributed to, or permitted in any way, the taking of human life through murder, abortion, or euthanasia?
- Have I done damage to another's health or well-being in any way?
- Have I jeopardized my own well-being through the use of alcohol, drugs, or some other self-destructive behavior?
- Have I acted on anger unjustly?
- Have I wished ill fate to befall another?
- Have I done anything that gives bad example to others that might lead them to sin?

**VI and IX. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.**

- Have I engaged in voluntary sexual intercourse outside of marriage?
- Within marriage, have I engaged in sexual activity without regard for showing love to my spouse or without openness to the possibility of conceiving children?
- Have I been sexually impure with myself or others?
- Has my marriage been celebrated in the Catholic Church or with the permission of the Catholic Church?

**VII and X. You shall not steal. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**

- Have I respected the property of others? Have I taken the goods of another or done willful damage to them?
- Have I taken the intellectual property of others by taking their ideas without giving proper credit?
- Have I deprived others of a just wage? Have I failed to give my employer a day's work for a day's pay?
- Have I failed to share my resources with those less fortunate than me?
- Have I been discontent with my own blessings from God and envied those of my neighbor?

**VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

- Have I told serious lies? Have I gossiped?
- Have I disclosed the faults of another without serious reason for doing so?
- Have I willfully and maliciously damaged another's reputation?