

# CONFESSION GUIDE



## THE SACRAMENT OF CONVERSION

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THE FIRST STEP IN RETURNING  
TO THE FATHER FROM WHOM  
ONE HAS STRAYED BY SIN

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH p. 1423



SAINT JAMES PARISH  
ARLINGTON HEIGHTS



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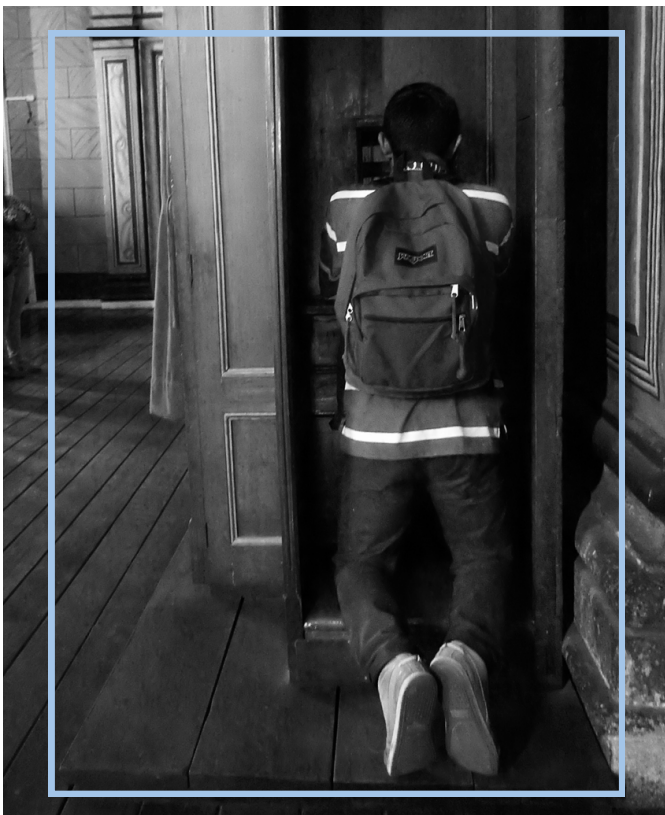
# CONFESSION

## *a guide to the sacrament of healing*

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), we encounter Jesus Christ, who after rising from the dead, breathed the Holy Spirit on his Apostles — the first priests — and gave them the power to forgive sins in his name (Jn 20:23). The Heart of Christ burns with love for us and he wants us to experience his immense and unfathomable mercy by confessing our sins and receiving his forgiveness. This Sacrament gives us the consolation of God's pardon and strengthens our relationship with Christ and his Church.

### A PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION:

Dear Jesus, help me to make a good Confession,  
help me to find out my sins,  
help me to be sorry for them,  
help me to make up my mind not to sin again.  
Have mercy on me, O Lord, and forgive me.  
Mary, my mother, pray for me.



### HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION:

- Enter the confessional and greet the priest. Begin by making the sign of the cross and say, "bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been \_\_\_\_ days/months/years since my last confession."
- List your sins. Try to be as thorough as possible, it's OK if you don't remember every single sin. Ask the priest for help if you feel stuck.
- Listen to the priest. Your confession may seem more like a conversation than you just listing sins. He may offer some guidance and suggest ways to receive the Father's love and avoid sin in the future. Often, you'll receive a penance you'll be able to complete while still at church.
- Pray the Act of Contrition
- Receive absolution from God, via the priest.
- Depart and fulfill your act of penance.
- Rejoice!

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# EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

*based on the Ten Commandments*

**I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.**

Have I treated people, events, or things as more important than God?

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

Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church, or people?

**Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.**

Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday Vigil) and on Holy Days of Obligation (Jan. 1; the Ascension; Aug. 15; Nov. 1; Dec. 8; Dec. 25)? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord's Day, and proper relaxation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

**Honor your father and your mother.**

Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?

**You shall not kill.**

Have I harmed another through physical, verbal, or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?

**You shall not commit adultery.**

Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?

**You shall not steal.**

Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

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

Have I gossiped, told lies, or embellished stories at the expense of another?

**You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse.**

Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

**You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**

Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?

## KEEP IN MIND:

When we think about our sinfulness, we might feel embarrassed or alone. It's not something we want to share with others. We may feel intimidated or reluctant to share our sins with the priest.

If you're nervous or uneasy about going to confession, remember these three things:

- It doesn't matter if it's been a long time (or a short time), God is still happy you're there.
- Our God is a God of mercy. **God wants to forgive us.**
- God, not the priest present in the confessional, is the one doing actually absolving your sins.

Priests are bound by a canon law concept known as the "seal of the confessional," which forbids them from sharing confessions under any circumstance.