



Preparing for Confession



Sometimes I am asked, "Where do I begin?", when someone has not been to confession for a long time, or perhaps, has never been to confession in their life. What follows are the 10 Commandments of Confession (an expansive list of questions to ask yourself as you prepare for the Mystery of Holy Confession).

First Commandment

Have I believed in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Have I failed to trust in God and his mercy? Have I complained against God in adversity? Have I been thankful for God's blessings? Have I doubted the Christian faith and the teachings of the Church? Have I tried to serve God and keep His Commandments? Have I given way to superstition? Have I frequented the religious meetings of heretics and schismatics? Have I neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution? Have I failed to pray to God faithfully? Have I put myself before God?

Second Commandment

Have I made an idol of any person or thing? Have I given to anyone or anything the worship that is due to God alone? Have I set before myself the holy life of Jesus and tried to imitate Him? Have I read the Holy Scriptures regularly? Have I been irreverent during Church Services, let my attention wander, or been insincere? Have I neglected to receive Holy Communion regularly or without due preparation?

Third Commandment

Have I profaned the holy name of God in any way? Have I cursed anyone or anything, or sworn a false oath? Have I failed to give proper reverence to holy persons and things? Have I had due respect for the clergy of the Church, or hindered them in performing God's work? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into any unlawful contract or made an unlawful promise?

Fourth Commandment

Have I stayed away from Church on Sundays or prevented others from going? Have I done unnecessary work on Sundays? Have I spent the day in unwholesome fashion or profaned it by improper conduct? If I could not go to Church because of illness or other grave cause, have I prayed at home? Have I caused anyone else to profane the Lord's Day? Have I kept the Fasts and Festivals prescribed by the Church?

Fifth Commandment

Have I respected my parents and been obedient to them? Have I been guilty of deception, or caused them pain by my words or actions? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I done my duty towards my family? Have I been wanting in love or kindness towards my husband (or wife), or harmed him (or her) in any way? Have I set my children a good example and tried to bring them up properly? Have I corrected their faults with patience and not with anger? Have I over-indulged or spoiled them? Have I neglected my god-children and failed in my obligations towards them? Have I worked for my employers honestly and diligently? Have I treated fairly all those who have worked for me? Have I honoured God as my Heavenly Father by treating others as my brothers, and have I honoured the Church as my spiritual Mother by honouring and practicing my religion in accordance with her teachings?

Sixth Commandment

Have I caused the injury or death of any one, or wished that I were dead? Have I done anything to shorten my own life or that of someone else by injuring health, or through evil and intemperate living? Have I given way to anger, or harmed others with words or actions? Have I defamed others who needed help, or failed to stand up for those unjustly treated? Have I been cruel to anyone? Have I mistreated animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harboured evil thoughts against them?

Seventh Commandment

Have I given way to impure thoughts, words, or deeds? Have I committed any unworthy actions alone or with others? Have I degraded myself in any way, or forgotten human dignity? Have I read immoral books or magazines, or delighted in obscenity of any kind? Have I associated with bad companions or frequented unsavoury places? Have I eaten or drunk or smoked too much? Have I been lazy, idle, or wasted my time? Have I led others to commit sinful acts? Have I been unfaithful to any trust confided in me?

Eighth Commandment

Have I stolen anything or wished to do so? Have I kept anything that did not belong to me? Have I tried honestly to find owners of lost articles I have found? Have I paid my debts? Have I lived within my income, and not wastefully and extravagantly? Have I given to charitable causes in proportion to my means? Have I been honest and upright?

Ninth Commandment

Have I told lies, or added to or subtracted from the truth? Have I made careless statements or spoken evil of anyone? Have I told any secrets entrusted to me, or betrayed anyone? Have I gossiped about anyone or harmed their reputation? Have I concealed the truth, assisted in carrying out a lie, or pretended to commit a sin of which I was not guilty? Have I tried to see the good in others rather than their shortcomings?

Tenth Commandment

Have I envied anything good that has come to others? Have I been jealous of another's good fortune? Have I wished for anything that was another's? Have I damaged or destroyed the property of others? Have I wished for things God has not given me, or been discontented with my lot? Have I been stingy? Have I held back anything due another? Have I hoped for the downfall of anyone so that I might gain by it? Have I failed to be gracious and generous to anyone? Have I expected God to give me that which I would refuse one of my fellow men?

Some Practical Tips:

- No one is sinless. By saying “*I haven’t committed any sins to confess*” we have just sinned! Always take the time to prepare yourself properly by first praying and then meditating on your Confession. Some find it helpful to write their sins down so they don’t forget.
- Refer to the monthly Schedule of Services for the dates of Confession that month and book a Confession time ASAP!
- Some may say, “*I confess my sins to God in private. I don’t need to give my Confession to the Priest.*” First of all, we cannot absolve ourselves from sin. This can only be done by God through the Priest. Secondly, the Priest stands beside us as our support, as our Spiritual Father, and as our witness to the Confession. He cannot and will not ever judge us.
- What we confess remains under the *Seal of Confession*. Nothing discussed can be shared with anyone.
- Our Confession should not last any longer than 15-30 minutes. *If we need to speak with Father about a spiritual matter (ie Spiritual Counselling) we should not use Confession time for this UNLESS Father has previously agreed to it)*
- We are to Confess OUR OWN SINS....NOT THE SINS OF OTHERS!
- Details of our sins are not always necessary. (e.g. instead of saying that I have gossiped about so and so about this and that... I just need to confess that *I have gossiped*)
- We should never validate our sin! A sin is a sin. Once we justify it, we have sinned again.

Remember my beloved child, Holy Confession is one of the Mysteries of the Church! To help us, an honest self-examination, fasting, and prayer will aid us in preparing us as we stand before the Lord, with our Spiritual Father/Father Confessor by our side as our support and our witness, and say, “*Please forgive me Father, for I have sinned.*”

In Christ,

+ *Fr. Theodoros*