

Conscience: Our Inner Voice

Conscience is a voice within each of us. It helps us to know what God wants us to do. It helps us know the difference between right and wrong. It helps us know the ways we have sinned. The Holy Spirit helps us to listen to and follow our conscience.

Before we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we prepare ourselves. We examine our conscience.

Here is a way to examine your conscience before going to confession:

- Pray to the Holy Spirit for help.
- Review the Ten Commandments and the teachings of the Church
- Think about the times you did not act as a loving child of God.
- Think about the sins you are going to confess.

After your **examination of conscience**, you are ready to go to confession.

Something to think about: *The priest can never tell anyone what he has heard in confession. This is called the Seal of Confession.*

The Ten Commandments

I Learn God's Laws	I Follow God's Laws
1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange Gods before me.	1. Love nothing more than God.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	2. Use God's name with reverence.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.	3. Keep Sunday a day of prayer and rest.
4. Honor your father and mother.	4. Respect those who care for you.
5. You shall not kill.	5. Treat all human life with respect.
6. You shall not commit adultery.	6. Respect married life.
7. You shall not steal.	7. Keep only what belongs to you.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	8. Tell the truth. Do not spread gossip.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.	9. Respect your neighbors and friends.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.	10. Be grateful when your needs are met.

Going to Confession

After my examination of conscience, I am ready to go to confession.

1. At the beginning of our confession, the priest welcomes me, and we pray the Sign of the Cross. He invites us to trust in God who loves me. We may read a passage from the Bible together.
2. I tell my sins to the priest. We must confess all our mortal sins. It is also good to confess our venial sins.
3. The priest helps and counsels me. Then he gives me a penance. This may be a prayer to pray or a good deed to do. We do our penance to show that we want to make up for what we have done wrong and that we are ready to change our way of acting.
4. The priest asks me to tell God I am sorry. I do this by praying the Act of Contrition.
5. I receive absolution from the priest. He absolves me from my sins in Jesus' name. The priest is the only one who can give us absolution, the words of forgiveness and peace. He says "I absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
6. The priest says "God in peace," and I answer "Amen." I leave and do the penance the priest gave me as soon as possible.