

An Adult's Confession Booklet

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Imprimi Potest:
Edmund T. Langton, CSsR
Provincial, St. Louis Province
The Redemptorists

Imprimatur:
+ John N. Wurm, S.T.D., Ph.D.
Vicar General, Archdiocese of St. Louis

ISBN 978-07648-2917-8
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Revised in 1986, 1994 and 2026.
Previously published as 978-07648-0522-6

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Printed in the United States of America
26 27 28 29 30 / 5 4 3 2 1

To order, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org

Contents

Points To Remember	6
Sorrow	7
Purpose of Amendment	11
Confession of Sins	12
Performing the Penance	12
Condensed Examination	14
A More Thorough Examination of Conscience	17
I. Adore God Alone	17
II. Keep God's Name Holy	17
III. Keep the Lord's Day Holy	18
IV. Respect and Obey Lawful Authority	18
V. Respect Others, Body and Soul	19
VI. and IX. Respect the Sacredness of Sex	21
VII. and X. Respect the Property of Others	22

VIII. Respect the Truth and the Good Name of Others	24
The Role of the Priest	26
Special Advice	29

Followers of Christ who have sinned but who have been “moved by the Holy Spirit and comes to the Sacrament of Penance, should, above all, turn to God” with their whole hearts. “This inner conversion of heart, which involves contrition for sin and the resolution to lead a new life, is expressed by confession made to the Church, by due satisfaction (an act of penance), and also by amendment of life” (*Order of Penance*, 6).

This booklet is concerned with important points to remember in the actual confession of sins and the necessary examination of conscience that must take place beforehand. It treats the following: 1) points to remember—necessary steps to make a worthy confession; 2) a condensed examination of conscience; 3) a more thorough examination of conscience; 4) the priest’s role in the sacrament; and 5) special advice for an adult convert’s first confession, for one who has neglected confession for a long time, and for a general confession.

Points to Remember

- I must carefully *examine* the state of my soul since my last good confession.
- I must have true *sorrow* for all my serious sins.
- I must sincerely *resolve* to do my best to avoid all serious sin in the future.
- I must *confess* all my unforgiven serious sins to the priest.
- I must *perform* the penance the confessor gives me.
- The *examination* will be considered separately after explaining the other four points.

Sorrow

Sorrow consists of grief and regret at having sinned. It implies a profound change (conversion) of the whole person. It includes a desire to get rid of all attachment to sin.

This sorrow must extend to all my serious sins, not just to some of them. If I consistently miss Mass on Sundays because I like to sleep late and willfully refuse to try to do better in the future, I am not worthy of absolution, even if I am sorry for my other sins, like impatience and lying.

Just as sin itself is not a matter of feeling, sorrow for sin is not a matter of feeling. Some persons who have disobeyed God's law will remark to the priest: "But I didn't *feel* bad." They presume that guilt lies in the intensity of their feelings. They try to judge their sorrow for sin by their external feelings of grief.

External feelings of depression after the commission of sins may stem from purely natural causes, such as disgust for my lack of self-control, fear of possible unwanted effects