

The Sacrament of Confession



***‘Don’t be afraid to go to the Sacrament of Confession,
where you will meet Jesus who forgives you.’***

Pope Francis

The Sacrament of Confession during the Covid-19 pandemic is now available at St. Mary’s by appointment. It is truly a wonderful gift, instituted by the Lord himself, which allows us to personally experience his mercy and forgiveness.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

John 20:20–23

In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance.

St. Thomas Aquinas

It is only natural to feel nervous about going to confession. But don't let nerves or fear hold you back. However long it has been, however bad the sin, however embarrassed you feel – don't let anything stop you from going to confession. The Lord is waiting and eager to give you his love and forgiveness.



A question that people often ask is, 'What do I say in Confession?' Below is a simple and clear explanation by Fr Stephen Wang of the Archdiocese of Westminster.

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

An Examination of Conscience is simply a list of some of the ways that we can love God and our neighbour, and some of the ways we can fail to love through sin. Reflecting on an Examination of Conscience helps us to be honest with ourselves and honest with God. It is not meant to be a burden. It helps us to examine our lives, and to make a good confession, so that we can be at peace with Christ and with one another. The important thing, of course, is to love, and to live our Catholic faith with our whole heart. But now and then it is useful to spell out what this really means, and to make sure that we are not kidding ourselves.

This Examination of Conscience is not to be used every day, or even at every confession – we do not need to go through a checklist every time. It is here for us to look at every now and then. It is based around the Ten Commandments. As we reflect on it, we can ask the Lord to shine his light into our hearts. Some things will not apply to us; but if something in particular touches our conscience, then we can bring it to confession.

Above all, let us remember God's mercy and his love for us. His love never fails or changes. He loves us passionately, with infinite kindness and tenderness. The only reason we remember our sins is so that we can turn to him and receive his forgiveness, and learn to love him in a new and deeper way.

[1ST COMMANDMENT] I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

[2ND COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

Do I seek to love God with all my heart?

Do I stay faithful to Jesus, even when I have difficulties or doubts?

Do I make at least some time for prayer every day?

Do I hold on to the practice of my Catholic faith, or have I turned away from it, or spoken against the teachings of the Church?

Have I been involved with the occult, e.g., with ouija boards, séances, tarot cards, fortune telling, or the like? Have I put faith in horoscopes?

Have I received Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin?

Have I lied to the priest in confession or deliberately not confessed a mortal sin?

Have I used God's holy name irreverently?

When things are difficult, do I hope in God, or do I give in to self-pity and despair?

Do I get angry and resentful with him?

[3RD COMMANDMENT] REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?

Do I make a sincere effort to come to Mass on time, and to listen and pray during the Mass? Do I fast for an hour before receiving Holy Communion (apart from water and medicine)? Am I reverent in church?

Do I try to keep Sunday as a day of prayer, rest and relaxation, avoiding unnecessary work?

[4TH COMMANDMENT] HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

Do I honour and respect my parents? Do I show kindness to my brothers and sisters?

Do I treat my children with love and respect? Do I carry out my family duties?

Do I support and care for the well-being of all family members, especially the elderly and the sick?

Do I honour and obey my lawful superiors, and follow the just laws of my country?

[5TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

Do I love my neighbour as myself? Do I try to be kind and generous with everyone I meet? Do I help those in need?

Do I harbour hatred or anger against anyone?

Do I try to forgive those who have hurt me? Do I pray for my enemies?

Have I deliberately tried to hurt anyone – physically or emotionally?

Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have an abortion?

Have I attempted suicide?

Have I abused alcohol or used illegal drugs?

Have I led anyone to sin through bad example or through direct encouragement?

Do I care for my own physical, emotional, and spiritual health?

[6TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

[9TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE.

Am I faithful to my husband or wife, in my actions, my words, and my thoughts?

As a Catholic, was I married outside the Church?

Has our marriage been open to new life, or have I used contraception, or been sterilized?

Have I engaged in sexual activity before marriage or outside of marriage?

Do I view pornography on the TV or internet, or through videos or magazines

Have I masturbated?

Have I used impure language or told impure jokes?

Do I dress and behave modestly? Am I respectful and chaste in my relationships?

Do I try to turn away from impure thoughts and temptations?

[7TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods?

Have I cheated anyone of what I owe them?

Am I lazy? Do I waste time at work or at school or college?

Do I gamble excessively?

Do I share what I have with the poor and with the Church according to my means?

Have I copied or used pirated material: videos, music, software?

[8TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

Do I tell the truth, even if it is inconvenient? Or do I lie or mislead people?

Am I a trustworthy and sincere person? Do I keep my word and my promises, and keep confidential things confidential?

Have I cheated in exams or been dishonest in any way in my studies?

Have I gossiped or spread rumours or spoken badly about people in any way?

Have I ridiculed or humiliated anyone?

[10TH COMMANDMENT] YOU SHALL NOT DESIRE YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOODS.

Am I grateful for the things I have and for the blessings God has given me? Or am I always complaining?

Am I jealous of other people: jealous of their possessions, talents, beauty, success or relationships?

Am I greedy or selfish? Am I too caught up with material things?

(Text by Fr Stephen Wang, adapted from the booklet "A Way of Life for Young Catholics", published by the Catholic Truth Society)

Brothers and Sisters I invite and warmly welcome you to come back to the Sacrament of Confession. Come back to the Lord, come back home and experience God's mercy and forgiveness in a very real and tangible way.

