

21 Questions for the 21st Century Sinner

If you have trouble identifying and acknowledging your sins, it may be because you have become desensitized to sin. We live in a world that encourages sin under the guise of entertainment, personal freedom, and individual rights. As you receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation more frequently, the Holy Spirit will begin to touch your heart and bring about a greater awareness of actions that please God and actions that offend God.

As you examine your conscience, consider the following questions.

1. Have you used the Lord's name in vain or in a casual manner (OMG, for example)?
2. Have you done unnecessary work on Sunday...Have you kept His day holy?
3. Have you missed Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of obligation?
4. Have you fasted on the required days of fasting and have you fasted one hour before receiving Holy Communion?
5. Have you killed anyone, had an abortion, or aided or encouraged someone to have an abortion or have you not offered support to someone who is dealing with a crisis pregnancy?
6. Have you used contraceptives or encouraged someone to use contraceptives?
7. Have you prayed every day?
8. Have you watched TV or movies, read books or magazines, or listened to music that contain immoral sexual activity, violence, or obscene language?
9. Have you spent time every day learning about your faith and reading Sacred Scripture?
10. Have you engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage...Have you engaged in homosexual acts or masturbation?
11. Have you had impure thoughts?
12. Have you looked at or engaged in pornography?
13. Have you talked about others unkindly or gossiped...Have you listened to others who have spoken unkindly or gossiped?
14. Have you engaged in excessive behaviors and habits (eating, drinking, smoking, etc.) and consume more than what you need?
15. Are you attached to or preoccupied with your electronic devices (computers, cell phones, iPads, iPods, etc.) with games, texts, emails, etc. And are you overly attached to social media, consuming time that you could otherwise be connecting with God?
16. Have you stolen anything including time from your employer?
17. Have you dressed provocatively... have you come to Mass dressed appropriately?
18. Have you contributed to the Church, cared for the poor, the lonely, and the sick?
19. Have you shown respect to your parents, your spouse, your priest and those in authority over you?
20. Have you lied or cheated?
21. Have you forgiven others who have offended you and have you asked for forgiveness from others with whom you have offended?

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Prayer Before Confession:
**Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind and soften my heart
so that I can know my sins and be truly sorry for them.**

How to Go to Confession

1. Enter the confessional and make the Sign of the Cross. The priest will usually initiate this.
2. Say, **"Bless me Father for I have sinned it's been (state how much time has passed) since my last confession."** If you don't remember, approximate the time in months or years.
3. Name your sins and the number of times you have committed them. Keep this very brief. The priest will ask for details if necessary. This is not a counseling session. If you need more time with the priest, make an appointment for him to hear your confession.
4. After you have finished confessing your sins say, **"For these and for all my sins, I seek forgiveness."**
5. The priest may address your sins, and will usually give you penance.
6. The priest will ask you to make an Act of Contrition. Below is one version of this prayer:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

7. The priest will say a prayer of absolution over you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
8. The priest may say, "Go in peace." You reply, **"Thanks be to God. Thank you, Father."**

Things nice to know about going to confession:

- If you forget the above steps, the priest will guide you with what you are to say and do. Be not afraid!
- Be honest, be brief, and tell all of your sins.
- It's best to start with your worst sins first.
- Do your penance as soon as possible after confession. If you are given prayers as a penance, try to say them immediately after confession.
- The priest is "In Persona Christi." He is there representing Christ. He is there to absolve you of your sins and to reestablish your relationship with Christ.
- Remember, there is no sin too big for God's forgiveness and mercy.

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