

A photograph of Pope Benedict XVI, an elderly man with white hair, wearing dark sunglasses and white papal vestments. He is looking down and holding a rosary. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with stone pillars. The image is framed by a double-line border, one blue and one gold.

# A GUIDE TO RECONCILIATION FOR TEENS

“REDISCOVER THIS SACRAMENT  
OF FORGIVENESS THAT MAKES JOY  
WELL UP IN A HEART REBORN  
TO TRUE LIFE.”

~ POPE BENEDICT XVI

*This booklet is intended for the use of teenagers 14 years of age and above. Some content may be inappropriate for children under 14.*

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*Many thanks to the priests of the Diocese of Bridgeport who are always available to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to teens at parishes, Catholic schools, and youth events.*

*A special thanks to all the priests, consecrated, and laity who contributed to this booklet.*

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Bishop of Bridgeport

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DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT  
OFFICE FOR PASTORAL SERVICES  
YOUTH MINISTRY



[www.OfficePastoralServices.org/youth.htm](http://www.OfficePastoralServices.org/youth.htm)



## WHAT IS RECONCILIATION AND WHY SHOULD I GO?

Reconciliation (also known as confession) is a sacrament that was instituted by Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. The Lord gave the Apostles (the first priests) the power to forgive sins. Every time you go to confession, you will have the opportunity to encounter the unconditional mercy of God, who always offers repentant sinners forgiveness. After absolution and the fulfillment of your penance, you will have a deep experience of the gift of reconciliation with God and the Church. Not only will you experience freedom from all that is evil, but you will also receive the grace that will strengthen you in your efforts to live an authentic and life-giving friendship with Christ. I pray that by the frequent reception of this Sacrament, you may become ever stronger witnesses of the love of Christ in the world today.

Faithfully in Christ,

*+ William E. Lori*

Most Reverend William E. Lori  
Bishop of Bridgeport





## HOW DO I MAKE A GOOD CONFESSION?

- **Prepare:** Prayerfully recall your sins since your last confession. Some will be specific actions; others represent a more general pattern of behavior. To help you prepare well, you will find in this booklet an examination of conscience.
- **Become contrite with the grace of God:** Contrition is sincere sorrow for having offended God. There can be no forgiveness of sins if we do not have sorrow and a firm resolve not to repeat our sins.
- **Go to a priest and confess your sins:** Confession allows us to confront our sins in a profound way, to take responsibility for them, and thereby to open ourselves again to God and to the communion of the Church.
- **Receive a penance:** The priest will recommend a concrete action after your confession, to indicate to God the sincerity in your heart. Usually he suggests prayer or self-denial.
- **Say an Act of Contrition:** Pray for forgiveness. The priest will invite you to say a prayer of sorrow aloud. The Act of Contrition is provided at the end of this booklet.
- **Receive absolution:** This is the best part! The priest gives absolution, and God forgives your sins. Go forth, and with God's help, begin to live a new life of freedom from the slavery of sin!





## AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR TEENS

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THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD; YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

- Have I loved God with my whole heart, or have I sometimes given greater importance to things of this world: money, image, looks, clothes, popularity or selfish desires? Have I put sports, school, friends, family or work before God?
- Have I claimed to have good values, but often bent or abandoned them in order to fit in and be “part of the group”?
- Have I really wanted to be transformed by the will of God, or have I just used my religion in order to “look” like a good Christian person?
- Have I voluntarily doubted or denied that God exists?
- Have I refused to believe what God has revealed to the Church?
- Have I believed or have I used fortune telling, horoscopes, the occult, good-luck charms, tarot cards, palmistry, Ouija boards, séances, or reincarnation?
- Have I sometimes denied that I am Catholic?
- Have I given time to God each day in prayer? Have I turned to God in thankful prayer, or have I prayed mostly when I wanted something?
- Have I been indifferent to God? Have I considered Him and His plan for me in my daily life?
- Have I coped with problems that confront me and



maintained my Christian hope in spite of hard times and difficulties, or have I gotten depressed and despaired?

- Have I been presumptuous regarding my own capacities? Have I considered myself superior or better than others?
- Am I preoccupied with my physical appearance and what others think of me?
- Have I continued to learn about God and grow in the knowledge of my faith (ex. – by paying attention in Church and religion class, reading about my faith)?
- Have I fasted for one hour before receiving the Eucharist?
- Have I received Holy Communion when I was in a state of mortal sin?

### THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD IN VAIN.

- Have I shown disrespect for God's name by misusing it out of frustration or anger?
- Have I used God's name without a purpose? Have I made false oaths or sworn casually or in anger?
- Have I made a promise without the intention of keeping it?
- Have I omitted mentioning God's name in appropriate situations, in conversations with friends and family members?
- Have I been angry with God?



## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

- Have I, through my own fault, missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have I failed to make the necessary effort to get to Mass, even when it is difficult or inconvenient for me?
- Have I deliberately arrived at Mass late or left early?
- Have I been recollected and focused at Mass, participating in the prayers, or have I deliberately let my mind wander?
- Have I paid close attention to the Word of God at Mass? Have I been open to receive the Word of God and allowed it to take effect in my life?
- Have I acknowledged the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and received Holy Communion with respect and reverence?
- Have I worked on Sunday when it was not necessary?
- Have I set aside Sunday as a day of rest and charity, and a day to spend time with my family?

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

- Have I respected my parents and those people who stand in their place: teachers, coaches, etc...?
- Have I obeyed all just civil laws, including those concerning underage drinking and driving at excessive speeds?
- Have I caused tension and fights in my family?
- Have I appreciated the many sacrifices my parents make for me? Have I shown them gratitude?





- Have I done chores without being asked?
- Have I listened to my parents' reasoning when they say "no" to me? Have I obeyed them?
- Have I been patient with my parents and family members?
- Am I resistant and stand-offish when my parents are trying to help me or when they ask something of me?

### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

- Have I physically harmed another person with malicious intent?
- Have I been violent or abusive either in action or in speech?
- Have I injured a relationship by hatred, anger, impatience, pride or slander?
- Have I asked for pardon when I unjustly offended someone?
- Have I been lazy?
- Have I placed myself or others in danger due to use of alcohol or other drugs?
- Have I taken care of my body by giving it enough sleep, exercise and food? Have I abused my body by using illegal drugs, getting drunk, overeating, under eating, not exercising, or exercising too much?
- Have I given a bad example to my peers by drug or alcohol abuse, fighting, or quarreling?
- Have I risked my life by driving or riding with someone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?



- Have I ever tried to commit suicide?
- Have I hated myself? Have I accepted myself?
- Have I striven to forgive those who have hurt me, or do I hold on to resentment and desire revenge?
- Have I approved of “mercy killing” (euthanasia)?
- Have I had an abortion, or encouraged or assisted others in an abortion?

(\*) Those who have had, encouraged, or assisted in an abortion, please read the end of this Examination of Conscience.

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

- Have I intentionally dwelled on and taken pleasure in impure, sexually-arousing thoughts? Have I tried to resist such thoughts when they have come to me involuntarily?
- Have I used crude, impure or suggestive words? Have I told impure stories or impure jokes? Have I listened to them?
- Have I deliberately looked at pornographic TV, Internet sites, videos, plays, pictures or movies? Have I deliberately read impure materials?
- Have I deliberately aroused myself sexually through touching or abusing my body? Have I committed the sin of masturbation?
- Have I committed impure acts with another - premarital sex, oral sex, or touching inappropriately or other improper forms of sexual arousal?
- Have I practiced artificial birth control (by pills, devices, condoms, withdrawal)?



- Have I avoided situations which might lead me to commit sins of impurity?
- Have I deliberately engaged in homosexual activity? (Note: a homosexual attraction that is not intentionally willed is not in itself sinful, provided one does not act upon it.)
- Have I forced others to engage in sexual acts against their will? Have I sexually abused or raped another person? Have I taken sexual advantage of a person who is younger or weaker than me, or who trusted me as a relative or family member?
- Have I understood and appreciated the gift of sexuality as a means of expressing love in the Sacrament of Marriage?
- Have I encouraged others to sin by my failure to maintain good moral standards?
- Have I dressed modestly and appropriately, so that I do not cause others to sin?
- Have I respected all members of the opposite sex, or have I reduced another human person to a mere object for my personal pleasure or gain?

**THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT,  
NINTH COMMANDMENT AND TENTH  
COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.  
YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S  
WIFE. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR  
NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.**

- Have I stolen another person's property, including pens, money, credit card, illegally-downloaded music etc...? Have I made restitution for stolen goods?
- Have I borrowed something without returning it?



- Have I respected the property of other people? Have I damaged or vandalized the property of others?
- Have I remained silent when others have stolen, damaged or vandalized property?
- Have I cheated at work or in school? Have I allowed others to copy my work or cheat off of me?
- Have I pressured others to help me cheat?
- Have I been honest and hardworking in school and at work? Or have I wasted time at work, school or at home, by spending too much time on unproductive activities?
- Have I tried to prove I am better than others by bragging or buying more things? Have I unnecessarily spent money because of vanity or caprice?
- Have I appreciated my own good qualities, or do I constantly compare myself with others and become resentful or bitter? Have I been satisfied with what God has given me?
- Have I failed to be generous with the material blessings God has given to me? Have I shared what I have with those in need?
- Am I charitable, or do I stand on the sidelines and complain about every flaw I can detect in others?
- Have I supported the life and mission of the Church by responsible stewardship – sharing my time and talent?
- Do I give a share of the money I earn back to God by contributing to my parish in the Sunday offertory collection?
- Have I envied others' families or possessions? Have I been envious or saddened when something good happens to others? Have I been jealous of others' success or goods?



- Have I made material possessions the purpose of my life?
- Do I trust that God will care for all of my material and spiritual needs?

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

- Have I lied?
- Have I damaged the reputation of another person by exaggeration or making up stories about them?
- Do I keep secret the confidential matters that are shared with me (except in cases where there is a moral obligation to disclose them in order to protect another person)?
- Have I stood up for those unjustly accused, or am I merely a channel through which rumors pass, whether or not they are true?
- Have I broken promises deliberately?
- Have I gossiped about others or failed to speak up when my friends gossip?
- Have I tried to build up my family, friends, and neighbors or am I more concerned with their faults and tearing them down? Have I been overly-critical of others and myself?
- Have I been uncharitable in my thoughts of others?





(\* The fifth commandment addresses life issues. Having an abortion, procuring one, or actively assisting or encouraging one is a grave matter. In addition, active support of abortion or euthanasia by word, deed, or legislative and political action is also a grave matter. Such things put our souls in grave danger. Those participating in any of these activities should not receive Communion until they have had a change of heart and confessed their sins.

### TO WOMEN WHO HAVE HAD AN ABORTION:

The wisdom of the Church has shown that many find it difficult to forgive themselves in these situations. Fathers of children who have been aborted seem to have as many difficulties as mothers. After-abortion support is available in the Diocese of Bridgeport through the Sisters of Life ([www.sistersoflife.org](http://www.sistersoflife.org)) at 866-575-0075, Rachel's Vineyard ([www.rachelsvineyardbpt.com](http://www.rachelsvineyardbpt.com)) at 203-218-0291 and Lumina ([www.postabortionhelp.org](http://www.postabortionhelp.org)) at 877-586-4621.

“Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.”  
Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, No. 99 (1995)



## RITE OF RECONCILIATION

1. The priest gives a blessing or greeting.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was... (give weeks, months or years) ago."
3. Confess all of your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.) When you have finished, let the priest know. You can use these words: "I am sorry for all these sins and for any that I cannot now remember."
4. The priest assigns a penance and may offer advice.
5. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins.
6. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.





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## ACT OF CONTRITION

“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments, 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 sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.”