

How to make a good confession

My hope for this talk is that it may help reduce or eliminate your time in Purgatory. Confession forgives the sin but there is temporal punishment due to the sin. The necessity of ridding ourselves of all the residual of sin. You can pull out the weed, but it grows back if you don't get the root out.

Dr. Karlo Broussard wrote a good book: "Purgatory is for Real" We should reflect upon that more. Also, think about Hell. The consequence of sin is death. "Gehenna" by Paul Thigpen is a rewrite of Dante "Inferno" with insights into the consequences of sin.

The fundamentals

1. Canon Law and Precepts of the Church require Confession of SERIOUS sins at least once a year.
2. All Mortal Sins must be confessed.
3. Venial Sins are forgiven by Acts of Contrition, Reception of Eucharist
4. The Format for Confession is:
 - a. How long since last confession
 - b. Naming sins and number of times
 - c. Bless me Father, it has been one week since my last confession. I have told lies 25 times.
5. Mortal Sin
 - a. Serious Matter

- i. What is Serious Matter? Commandments, Precepts and teaching of the Church.
- b. Knowledge it is serious
- c. Consent

Here is why it is important to learn how to make a good confession. A good confession helps us overcome sin and the consequences.

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. . . It has been one month since my last confession. These are my sins: I have been impatient, Frustrated, I am guilty of anger, jealousy, and selfishness. I have had impure thoughts.

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. . . It has been one week since my last confession. These are my sins: I have lied 12 times. I have cheated once. I have stolen. I have used the name of Jesus while swearing six times. I have committed adultery twice.

The first confession did not identify any sins, only feelings and thoughts that could be sinful. The first group included things that are appropriate for spiritual direction but do not have to be confessed unless they are clarified to identify what the sin was.

The second confession identified “acts” and behavior. While we say “I confess to your, my brothers and sisters

that I have sinned, in my thought, and my words, and what I have failed to do. . .” Thoughts become sins when “entertain” them or do something with them. And the part about what I have failed to do becomes a sin when we decide to neglect an obligation we have to love God and our neighbor. Note the “habitual sin” and the “Mortal sin”.

First we will look at sin, then spiritual direction.

1849. “Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience: it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as: an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law”. (St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas)

1853. Sins can be distinguished according to their objects, as can every human act; or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect; or according to the commandments they violate. They can also be classed according to whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself; they can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins, or again as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission. The root of sin is in the heart of man, in his free will, according to the teaching of the Lord: “For out of the heart come evil

thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man.”¹²⁸ But in the heart also resides charity, the source of the good and pure works, which sin wounds.

1. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him alone shall you serve
 - a. Idolatry
 - b. Superstition
 - c. Irreligion: Sacrilege, Simony
 - i. Masturbation is a “Sin Against Religion”.
Your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit, so abusing it is a sacrilege.
 - d. Atheism
2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain
 - a. Abuse of God’s Name
 - b. False Oaths
 - c. The Christian Name: giving scandal
3. Keep Holy the Lord’s Day
 - a. Sunday Obligation
 - b. Holy Days of Obligation
4. Honor your Father and Mother
 - a. Disrespect for authorities
 - b. Responsibilities: parent to child, child to parent
5. You shall not Kill
 - a. Murder

- b. Abortion
 - c. Euthanasia
 - d. Suicide
 - e. Scandal
 - f. Disrespect for persons
6. You shall not commit adultery
- a. Lust
 - b. immodesty
 - c. Fornication
 - d. Adultery
 - e. Pornography
 - f. Masturbation
 - g. Incest
7. You shall not steal
- a. Taking what is not your right
 - b. Neglect of the poor
8. You shall not bear false witness
- a. Perjury
 - b. Rash judgment
 - c. Detraction
 - d. Calumny
 - e. Lying
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife
- a. Lustful desires
 - b. Polluting the social environment with impure stories, etc.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods
- a. Envious obsession

b. Disordered desires

c. 2539 Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin: St. Augustine saw envy as "the diabolical sin." "From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity."

Sins of Thought

Start as temptations. Become sins when we decide to entertain them. We are making a mental act if we continue after recognizing the temptation.

Temptations are not sins.

Repeated occurrences suggest need for spiritual direction. We could call them "obsessions".

Feelings are not sins.

What we do with them is becomes sinful

Let's review our first confession.

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. . . It has been one month since my last confession. These are my sins: I have been impatient, frustrated, guilty of anger,

jealousy, and selfishness. I have had impure thoughts. This is where spiritual direction comes in. It is a process of discernment to identify the sins and how to deal with them.

Bless me Father, I have sinned. . .I am a mother of 5, the oldest is 8. I get frustrated and anxious a lot. The kids get on my nerves. I yell at them. Last week I struck one of them for sassing me.

The sin is revealed in the inappropriate behavior. Being frustrated and anxious are normal for mothers of little children. Spiritual direction could address how to better handle those feelings.

Spiritual Direction helps to discern when we are dealing with serious matter and the degree of the sin.

Bless me Father, I ate meat on Friday. Is it a Mortal Sin, a Serious sin, a venial sin, or No sin?

The “matter” is not eating meat. It is disobeying a precept of the Church. Disobedience of the Church is serious matter. So, what is the attitude being expressed toward Church authority? It could reach the level of Mortal sin, but likely would be a venial sin of casual neglect of the teaching or no sin because of confusion on what is demanded.

In sum: to get full benefit from Confession, you need to know the sin and desire to overcome it. A good act of contrition forgives venial sins but does not help you to overcome them or relieve the temporal punishment.