

- Do I provide for my family honestly, or do I engage in illegal and harmful activities to make ends meet?
- Have I respected the property of others? Have I stolen or accepted stolen goods?
- Have I cheated others of what I owe them?
- Do I work excessively, neglecting my family, or spend needless time at work to avoid situations at home?
- Do I endanger my family's security by gambling?
- Do I work with my wife to develop a reasonable family budget, and discourage materialism?
- Do I encourage a spirit of giving, especially in my children, teaching them not to look down upon the poor?
- Have I been envious of another's possessions, abilities, good looks, success, etc.?

## VI. Love and Responsibility

### Reflection

*Sexual sin is not always the most serious, but it is the one that catches most of us at some time in our lives. Sex and the body are great goods, so they must be protected by extra effort in our flesh-obsessed society.*

- Am I faithful to my wife in thought and action?
- Do I regard my wife's sexuality as a gift, or as something to be used only for my pleasure?
- Have I used contraception or allowed or pressured my wife to use contraception?

For an explanation of the Church's teaching on contraception and sterilization, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2366. For information about morally approved methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP), call your diocesan office and ask to speak to the director of family life issues or contact the Couple to Couple League at 513-471-2000, [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org).

- Have I been sterilized or allowed or pressured my wife to be sterilized?
- Have I deliberately and consciously entertained sexual thoughts about anyone besides my spouse?
- Have I deliberately viewed pornographic material – in books, magazines or the Internet?
- Have I exposed my children to pornographic material?
- Have I masturbated?
- Have I used impure language or told impure jokes, especially in front of children?

## VII. Love is Based on Honesty

### Reflection

*We all want to be good fathers and men of honor. Be honest with yourself and with others.*

- Have I encouraged a spirit of honesty within myself and my family?
- Have I lied or encouraged others to lie?
- Have I revealed secrets given to me by my wife, children, or friends to others without good reason?
- Have I fostered bad relations between members of my family by spreading lies or revealing faults of others? In particular, have I used malicious speech to turn my children against my wife or my wife against my children?

## Forgiveness

*This examination of conscience has only one goal: to help you become the father you are called to be, and to lead you to the extraordinary grace found only in the Sacrament of Confession. No matter how many or how serious your sins, Jesus awaits in the person of the priest with the grace of forgiveness. How sweet the sound when you hear the words: "Your sins are forgiven. Go in the peace of Christ."*

**“Your sins  
are forgiven.”**  
**“Go in Peace.”**

## Fathers for Good

This pamphlet is produced and distributed by Fathers for Good, an initiative for men and their families by the Knights of Columbus.

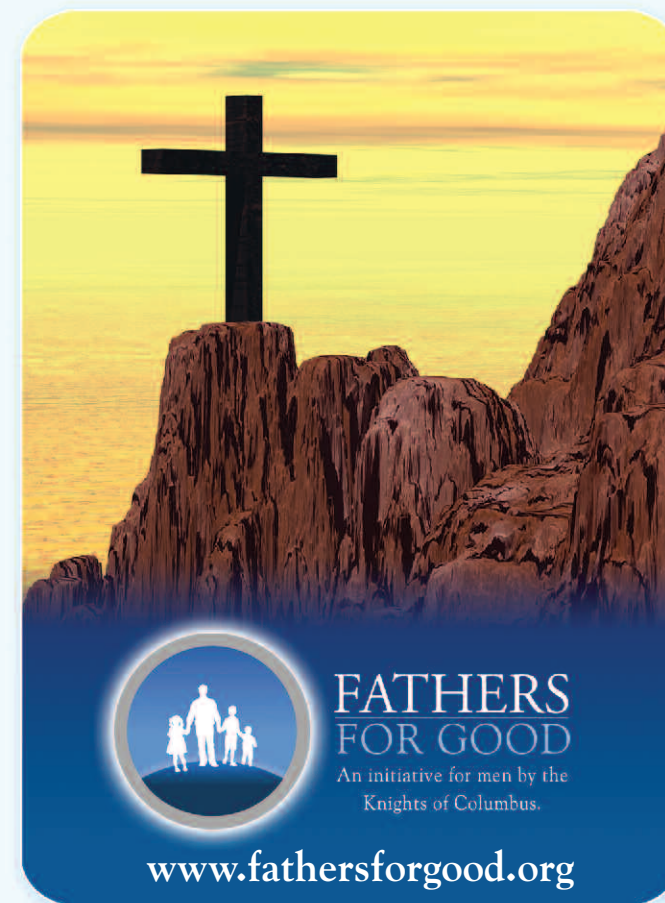
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IMPRIMATUR  
Most Rev. William E. Lori  
Bishop of Bridgeport  
February 10, 2009

# Guide to Confession for Fathers



## How am I doing?

It's a question we all ask ourselves.

As a father, you want to set a good example, do the right thing, and protect and provide for your family. Stop for a moment now and think: How am I doing?

That's what this *Guide to Confession for Fathers* is about – looking within for an honest assessment of who you are, what you've done (or failed to do) and how to resolve to do better as you move forward. We can usually spot faults in others; now it's time to point the finger at yourself.

Family life is demanding, the Catholic faith is demanding, and we all fall short in some way. Yet there is always God's mercy and understanding. That's why we need the sacrament of Confession, and to go through an examination of conscience on a regular basis.

Let's begin with a discussion of two often misunderstood topics.

**Sin** – The Greek word used in the New Testament means “missing the mark,” which is a good way to think about sin. We have a sense of what we should do yet we don't do it. We know we shouldn't give in to temptation but we do (*just this once, we think!*). You cannot sin by accident, but you have an obligation to form your conscience correctly.

**Conscience** – There's a popular notion that conscience is whatever you think is right. *Wrong*. A well-formed conscience is the voice of God within guiding you to do this good and avoid that evil. Yet conscience can be clouded, killed or in error. Each person has the obligation before God to form his conscience in accord with the moral law, the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus and his Church.

Now we may proceed with an *examination of conscience*, looking within to see how we may have fallen short and sinned.

## I. God and Neighbor

### Reflection

*Many people do not go to Confession because they say they have nothing to confess – they haven't stolen anything or killed anyone. Yet if you reflect seriously on the words of Jesus regarding love of God and neighbor, you may recall a number of ways you have “missed the mark.”*

*Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)*

- Do I seek to love God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength? Do I put anything or anyone above God?
- Do I expect my wife or children to replace God in my life? Do I expect them to be perfect or to give me everything I need emotionally and spiritually?
- Do I pray and attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation? Do I keep God in my thoughts so that his will has an effect on my actions?
- Am I a spiritual leader for my family? Am I an aid or an obstacle for my family to pray and worship God together? What do my attitude and example say to my children about God?
- Have I denied my faith to be respected by others, at work or in social circles? Have I belittled my faith in front of my family, tempting them to question their own faith?
- Do I recognize Jesus in my neighbors and treat them as I would want to be treated?
- Do I follow the example of the Good Samaritan when faced with people in need? Do I give generously of my time, talents and charity to the parish and community?

## II. My Marriage

### Reflection

*Remember the joy of your wedding day, when you promised before God to love your wife in sickness and in health, for better or for worse, till death do you part. Have you kept the promise?*

- Do I treat my wife with love and respect? Have I given myself to her fully, so that her good is my goal, or do I withhold some of the love that is due her?
- Do I listen to my wife's concerns, desires, and needs with true attention? Do I respond not only with words but with actions?
- Do I include my wife in important decisions, treating her as a true partner for life?
- If my wife and I are drifting away from one another, have I taken steps to rectify this? Have I engaged her in conversation about specific difficulties?

## III. My Children

### Reflection

*Children are a great blessing and turn husband and wife into father and mother, a new identity. Yet children can be a great challenge to your patience, expectations, weaknesses and faults.*

- Do I treat my children as gifts from God or more like a possessions to be molded by me?
- Do I make time for my children, even when tired, and care for them as my own flesh and blood?
- Do I allow my children freedom to develop as God made them, with unique personalities, while forming their consciences according to the guidance of the Church?
- Do I help my children along the road to maturity by providing discipline? Or do I avoid the difficult task of discipline?

- Do I deliberately pick favorites among my children, making some feel rejected?
- Do I physically abuse my children?
- Do I emotionally or mentally abuse my children? Do I ridicule them and point out all their faults and failings in order to discourage them?

## IV. Protecting Life

### Reflection

*Life is God's great gift. Each person is unique and made by God to serve a purpose in the world. To defend life lies at the heart of manhood.*

- Have I deliberately harmed anyone?
- Have I abused drugs or alcohol to the detriment of my life and the life of my family?
- Have I allowed my wife to abuse my children? Have I allowed any of my children to abuse my wife or each other, either physically or in any other way?
- Have I encouraged, pressured, or allowed my wife or daughter to have an abortion?
- Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it?
- Have I threatened the lives or safety of my wife or children?
- Do I routinely drive in a reckless or unsafe manner?

## V. Work and World

### Reflection

*A man's identity is tied up in his work, as he provides for himself and his family. Yet work is not an end in itself and must be done with virtue and honor.*

- Do I take seriously my duty to provide for my family?