

# CONFIRMATION CLASS

## SESSION 16

### THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

Unlike the Ten Commandments, which were given by God, the following six precepts (general rules) were devised by the Church over time to outline basic expectations of its members. By being confirmed, we commit to fulfilling these duties to the best of our ability.

**1. To attend Church every Sunday (unless prevented by good cause).**

Key point: For committed Christians, Sunday worship is not optional.

Valid reasons for missing Church on Sunday include illness, inability to travel, unavoidable work obligations, or a notable duty, such as caring for a sick person.

Invalid reasons include not feeling like it or having to entertain out-of-town company (they can be left alone for an hour or two or invited to come with you!).

Let your conscience be your guide!

**2. To keep the appointed fasts and abstinences.**

Fasting = reducing the total amount we eat and drink.

Abstinence = refraining from certain types of food, e.g. meat on Fridays.

The Principal Fasts are Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Other days observed “by special acts of discipline and self-denial” (BCP p. 17):

- Weekdays of Lent and Holy Week
- Fridays throughout the year (except in the Christmas and Easter seasons, or when a major feast falls on a Friday)

It is a good idea to establish a personal rule for how we observe these days, e.g., what we “give up for Lent.”

**3. To confess our sins to God – and in cases of serious sin to make our confession to a priest.**

Examination of conscience and confession of our sins to God are part of our normal spiritual preparation for receiving Communion. The General Confession in the Eucharist presupposes this preparation.

If our conscience remains troubled by a serious sin, then we should make our confession to a priest—to receive absolution, spiritual counsel and advice, the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the strengthening of faith (BCP, p. 317).

**4. To receive Holy Communion at least three times a year.**

This is the canonical minimum to be considered a communicant in the Episcopal Church!

If we cannot come to Church for any significant length of time—e.g., because of illness or infirmity—we should ask the clergy to bring us Communion.

**5. To work, pray, and give for the support of the Church and its mission.**

This is sometimes described as giving of our “time, talent, and treasure.”

Most Episcopal parishes rely on some form of pledging by parishioners to budget their financial resources. It is a basic expectation of church membership to support the parish and its work in this way.

**6. To obey the Church’s laws of marriage.**

Church members seeking to marry are expected to make a good-faith effort to work with their clergy to fulfill the Church’s rules regarding marriage, especially in—but not limited to—cases of remarriage after divorce.

Church members are expected not to attempt an “end run” around these rules by getting married outside the Church, e.g., in a civil wedding.