

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Preparing for Reconciliation

Confession (or "Reconciliation") is the Sacrament where you meet the Risen Jesus, who gave the Apostles -- the first priests -- the power to forgive sins in his name (Jn.20:23). First, ask the Holy Spirit to come into your heart to give you knowledge of your sins and courage to bring them to our Lord. He loves you, and deeply desires for you to come to him in humility so that he can free you of the burden of sin in your life -- that which is weighing you down. Reconciliation gives you the joy and consolation of God's love; it strengthens your relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

Prayer to Our Lady Before Confession:

Mary, Mother of Jesus,
Your words in Scripture are:
"Do whatever he tells you."
Help me always strive
to please your Son.

Facing Sin in My Life

The world in which we live has lost its sense of sin. That which is evil is sometimes held to be something "good." Sin can have the power in our lives to blind us from seeing reality. If we examine our hearts, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us, and we recognize our need for forgiveness.

The Lord has a plan for your life. He has destined you for heaven! He has already moved you to look at this pamphlet! Take confidence then, when you examine your conscience, because God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to bring you back to Himself and to know His love and mercy.

Sin is the deliberate choice of something opposed to God's law of love in one's thoughts, words or deeds. God loves us and desires our holiness. He wants to give Himself to us...but we say "no" to Him through our sins. Sin is its own worst punishment. There are two kinds of sin: mortal and venial. Mortal (or serious) sin destroys love. It turns one away from

God and community. It is a grave violation of God's Law. In order for a sin to be serious, the sinful act must be serious; the person had to have understood that it was seriously wrong; and the person had to have been free in committing the sin. So I cannot commit a serious (mortal) sin if the matter is not serious, if I did not know what I was doing, or if I did not act in full freedom. Venial sin is a minor offense against God that hurts our friendship with Him but does not destroy it.

When we go to Confession, the Lord strengthens us in our weakness, and our hearts are opened to receive the grace & mercy God desires to give us. Regular (or at least monthly) confession is an effective means in growing closer to Jesus Christ. Each time we celebrate this sacrament, we come to know more intensely what it means when St. Paul tells us we are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (cf. Rom. 6:11).

Sorrow for My Sins

We need to be sorry for our sins, yet confident in God's loving mercy when receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sorrow should include the resolve to avoid the sins committed as well as the persons, places and things that lead us to sin in the first place. If you know you have sinned but you lack sincere sorrow, consider the sufferings Jesus endured out of love for you. If you don't understand why something is actually sinful, ask the priest and he will help you.

Confession

"My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy."

How to go to Confession

- Examine your conscience using this guide and call upon the Holy Spirit, be truly sorry for your sins, and resolve to change your life.
 - Go to the priest, make the sign of the cross saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." It is then customary to tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession. The priest may respond by welcoming you. (It is helpful to then tell the priest your "state in life" -- e.g. single, married, teenager, etc.).
 - Tell the priest about your sins. Tell him how you have sinned, and how often it happened. If you are not sure whether something is a sin, ask the priest. Tell him about your serious sins. It is also good to confess any of your less serious (venial) sins.
 - Listen to the priest. He may offer you a verse from Scripture. If you have any questions about the Faith, how to grow in holiness, or whether something is a sin, feel free to ask him. The priest will then give you a penance, which is the first act of your "new life" after the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - Pray an act of contrition. Try to tell God "from your heart" that you are sorry and that you intend to sin no more (see sample "Act of Contrition" or you can make this prayer in your own words).
 - Listen as the priest absolves you of your sins and enjoy the fact that God has truly freed you from all your sins.
 - Do the penance the priest gives you. God's mercy does endure forever! Thank Him for what He has done for you.
- If you are not sure of what to do, tell the priest and he will make it easier for you.*

Examination of Conscience

1. "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."
 - Do I strive to have a personal love relationship with God?
 - Does God truly hold the first place in my life?
 - Do I "compartmentalize" God in my life? Am I a Christian on Sundays but something else during the week?
 - Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Lk 12:34). Do I place undue value & time on gaining & possessing those things the world considers important? Am I materialistic in my attitude & outlook in regard to money?
 - Have I participated in the occult, witchcraft, fortune telling, ouija boards, seances, tarot cards, good luck charms? Have I actually believed in horoscopes?
 - Have I received Communion in a state of mortal sin?
 - Have I told a lie in Confession or deliberately withheld confessing a mortal sin?
 - Have I ever denied a truth of the Catholic faith out of embarrassment?
 - Have I ever despaired of God's love for me?
 - Have I sinned presuming that God would forgive me afterwards?
 - Do I seek to be with God in prayer regularly?
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
 - Have I insulted God's holy name or used it lightly or carelessly?
 - Have I wished evil on anyone?
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
 - Have I missed Mass deliberately on Sundays or Holy Days of obligation?
 - Do I show God indifference by not taking Mass seriously? Do I leave early or come late deliberately or without good reason?
 - The sabbath is a day of solemn rest, holy to the Lord (cf. Ex. 31:15). Have I avoided unnecessary work on Sundays?
4. Honor your father and your mother.
 - Do I honor and obey my parents? Have I cursed at my parents or harmed them in any way?
 - Do I honor and obey my legitimate superiors?
 - Have I neglected my family responsibilities?

5. You shall not kill.
 - Have I deliberately hurt anyone?
 - Have I had an abortion? Have I encouraged or assisted anyone in any way to have an abortion?
 - Have I abused drugs or alcohol?
 - Do I have unresolved issues of hatred, anger or resentment? Bring this to the priest to "talk through it."
 - Have I given scandal to anyone by my sins, thereby leading them to sin?
 - Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it?
6. You shall not commit adultery.
 - (For married persons...) Am I faithful to marriage vows in thought and action?
 - Was I married outside of the Church without proper permission of the Church? (ask the priest if you are not sure)
 - Have I used artificial birth control, or been sterilized? (for more information see *)
 - (For those not married...) Have I been sexually active with anyone – male or female?
 - Have I engaged in any activity with the intention of becoming sexually aroused or sexually active, such as impure touching or overly passionate kissing?
 - Have I masturbated?
 - Have I indulged in pornographic magazines, videos or Internet websites?
 - Have I used impure language or told impure jokes?
 - Am I modest in dress?
7. You shall not steal.
 - Have I taken what is not mine? Destroyed property belonging to someone else? Knowingly accepted stolen goods?
 - Jesus teaches us to have a special love for the poor. Have I neglected those in need or ignored the poor? Am I generous with the material possessions I have?
 - Have I cheated?
 - Have I stolen anything from an employer or employee?
 - Have I illegally copied CD's or computer software?
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - Have I lied or sworn falsely?
 - Have I gossiped or ruined anyone's good name?
 - Have I revealed information about anyone that should have been kept confidential?

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
 - Have I deliberately and consciously permitted sexual thoughts about someone to whom I am not married? Do I try to control my imagination?
 - Am I responsible in the books I read and the movies I watch? Have I watched shows, videos, plays, or movies that contain impure scenes with the deliberate intention of watching those impure scenes?

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.
 - Am I envious of the possessions, talents, and successes of others?
 - Have I acted out of jealousy of someone's gifts or talents?

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

- Do I love my neighbor? Are there persons who I do not love or refuse to love? Have I ridiculed or humiliated others? Am I prejudiced?
- Do I seek to help and assist others in need – especially the poor that live around me?
- Do I seriously try to love others as Jesus wants?
- Do I forgive from my heart those who have hurt me? Do I pray for my enemies?
- Do I love myself as God loves me? Do I care for my physical, emotional and spiritual health?

Precepts of the Church

- Do I go to Confession at least once a year when I have serious sins to confess?
- Do I receive Holy Communion at least once during Easter time? Do I fast for one hour before receiving communion?
- Do I abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent (for those 14 and over) and fast on one meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (for those 16-59)?

(*) – for more information about new medically proven alternatives to contraception contact One More Soul (800)307-7685 or the Couple to Couple League (513)471-2000

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