

# 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 is Christ Jesus" (cf. Rom. 6:11).

## Sorrow for Sin

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.

## Act of Contrition

*"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

A) Examine your conscience using this guide and call upon the Holy Spirit, be truly sorry for your sins, and resolve to change your life.

B) 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.).

C) 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.

D) 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.

E) 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).

F) Listen as the priest absolves you of your sins and enjoy the fact that God has truly freed you from all your sins.

G) 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 Based on the Ten Commandments

### **1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no false gods before me.**

Do I put God before my spouse? My children? My work?  
Do I believe that God loves me?  
Do I have any "false gods" in my life like money, fame, power, possessions?  
Have I been involved in fortune-telling, astrology, palm-reading or witchcraft?  
Do I pray daily?

### **2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

Do I use curse words?  
Have I made oaths or sworn promises to God that I haven't kept?  
Have I allowed others to swear in my presence?

### **3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.**

Do I attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation?  
Do I avoid unnecessary work on Sundays?  
Do I avoid unnecessary shopping on Sundays?

### **4. Honor your father and mother.**

Do I show love to my parents, regardless of their age?  
Do I help them when I can?  
Do I respect my employer and others in authority?  
If I am a parent, have I given a bad example in word or deed to my children?  
Am I raising my children in the Catholic faith?

### **5. You shall not kill.**

Have I killed or seriously injured anyone?  
Do I gossip?  
Have I had an abortion or helped someone get an abortion?  
Have I lost my temper, given into anger or harbored resentment against my neighbor?  
Do I bear grudges?  
Have I ever harmed anyone physically, mentally or emotionally?  
Do I take care of the environment?

### **6. You shall not commit adultery.**

Have I used pornography?  
Have I watched movies that are overly violent or sexual?  
Have I consented to lustful thoughts?  
Have I masturbated?  
Have I had premarital sex?  
Have I treated anyone as an object, rather than a person?  
Do I eat or drink in excess?  
Have I lost sobriety through drunkenness or drug use?

### **7. You shall not steal.**

Have I stolen anything?  
Do I always give a full day's work for a full day's pay?  
Do I cheat in school or business?  
Am I fair in paying my employees?  
Am I honest in paying my taxes?  
Have I wasted time?  
Have I been generous in serving the poor?

### **8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

Have I told a lie, even a white lie?  
Have I told lies to avoid getting in trouble?  
Have I revealed other people's secrets?  
Have I failed to mind my own business?  
Have I accused someone falsely?  
Have I judged others harshly?  
Have I been prejudiced or discriminated against anyone?

### **9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.**

Have I been unfaithful to my spouse in either my actions or my thoughts?  
Have I used my wife or husband merely to satisfy my sexual urges?  
Have I acted inappropriately with those of the opposite sex?

### **10. You shall not covet your neighbor's property.**

Have I envied anyone else's possessions, money, fame or success?  
Have I used more than my fair share of resources?