

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

One of the secrets of a good confession is a thorough examination of conscience. To see in a dark room we need a light. So let us pause and pray that the Holy Spirit will shine the light of Christ in our hearts and minds, so that we may know our sins and make a good confession.

The Ten Commandments really come down to two: Love God; and love your neighbour as yourself. Let us think first about how much or how little we love God:

- Do I love God absolutely and my faith as the most important thing in life? Or do I compromise? Do I sometimes exclude God from my life? Do I love myself more than God and my faith - my own wishes and desires, my comforts and attitudes?
- Have I ever denied my faith, or hidden it to protect myself or my reputation? Or made fun of others for their faith? Have I always been faithful to the teachings of the Church - or do I place myself and my own opinions above those of the Church?
- Have I forgotten to pray? Or said my prayers badly, giving in to distractions? Could I have prayed more often and/or better? Do I tend to forget God during the day?
- Have I left it too long to go to confession? Did I fulfil my Easter duties last year? Have I ever received the Holy Eucharist irreverently or when I should really have gone to confession first?
- Have I ever missed Mass on a Sunday or a Holyday?

Let us now consider how we treat other people and how much or how little we love them:

- Could I have been more helpful to others: parents, children, relations, friends, neighbours, business-partners? Have I truly set a good example to children in moral and religious matters?
- Have I ever been impatient, angry, rude, harsh, spiteful, sarcastic or wished another harm? Have I been drunk or behaved badly or set a bad example? Have I hurt anyone by speaking badly about them? Have I damaged another's good reputation by gossip or by unreasonable expectations? Have I told lies or betrayed secrets?
- What about purity? How truly caring am I to my spouse? Have I given them enough time? Have I always been faithful to them or to my state of life? Have I used artificial means of birth control or sexual practices not befitting a disciple? Have I acted impurely? Have I looked at pornography e.g. on the TV or the internet?
- Have I been dishonest at work: with time, materials, expenses? Have I ever cheated or stolen anything without due restitution? Have I been duplicitous in my dealings with others? Am I overly materialist, focused on my life here and now, and not enough on eternal life? Am I truly concerned about promoting justice, peace, respect and love? Do I share enough with the poor?
- Have I truly loved others? Or have I wallowed in self-pity, brooded over injuries or refused to forgive? Have I been jealous of others? Or encouraged others in some way to do wrong?

