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The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Confession is the means by which we reconcile ourselves with God. Sin erodes the relationship between God and our soul. Confession repairs and renews that relationship. By repenting of our sins and confessing them to God in the presence of a priest we receive God's grace and know that sin no longer stands in the way of our relationship with God.

At the heart of the Gospel is the call to repentance, the call to turn from sin toward God. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15) Confession provides an intense means of turning our whole self to God. This happens because confession requires us to be honest with ourselves. It is humbling and sobering but with God's forgiveness we are drawn to a new and enriched relationship with Jesus, our neighbors, and ourselves.

Confession requires three things of us:

- Contrition: being truly sorry for the sins we have committed
- Confession: recognizing and admitting our sin
- Amendment of life: intending to lead a better life

An Examination of Conscience

Taking time to examine our conscience is the critical first step before making a confession. It is the act of looking earnestly at one's life. The exercise begins with prayer, placing yourself in the presence of God, our loving Father. Then we review our lives. Do your thoughts, words, and actions align with the words of Jesus?

Read the following and compare your life. Prayerfully ask God to remind you of your sins. Where have you fallen short? Think of yourself as God's child. Do not be in a hurry. Do not worry if you cannot remember everything but be honest with God and yourself. Write down what has happened. The following list is a guide to remind you of different areas where you might struggle. Each person's struggles will be different. If one area doesn't apply to your life, let it be and move on to the next one. Remember, you are thinking of your sin for the purpose of forgiveness, not condemnation.

Pride

Often called the source of all sin, pride means placing yourself in the place of God as the center and focus of your life. This comes in the form of irreverence, neglecting your duty to honor God, or thinking others are beneath you.

- **Distrust of God:** Ignoring God's wisdom and love. Getting obsessed with worry and things out of your control. Superstition or astrology are not the answer when God is to be trusted.
- **Distrust of others:** Expecting that others will dislike, reject, or mistreat us. Being quick to take offense or be suspicious when there is no reason to be so.
- **Disobedience:** Have you said no to God? Have you ignored lawful authority, the state or civil officials, your spouse, family, teachers, peers etc? Have you broken promises or been irresponsible with relationships? If in authority, have you failed to consider the best interests of those under your direction?
- **The Self:** Focusing on your self instead of praying, or meditating on things of God.
- **Impenitence:** Refusing to own up to our sins, where we have wronged God or others. Being flippant about our sin or thinking ourselves better than we truly are.
- **Refusal:** Deceiving, lying, or allowing others to suffer blame for our faults. Refusing to admit our error and apologize. Refusing to accept forgiveness from God or others. Did you doubt that God can forgive you? Did you choose to not forgive someone else?
- **Vanity:** Crediting yourself instead of God for your abilities. Did you show gratitude to those that helped you? (Coworkers, family, friends, etc.) Did you boast or draw attention to yourself? Did you claim wisdom or experience that you do not have?
- **Physical Vanity:** Did you spend unnecessary amounts of money, or energy on your looks, clothes, and surroundings? Did you try impress others? Were you prideful over status?
- **Presumption:** Relying on yourself instead of God. Thinking you are superior and the regular practice of prayer or reading scripture is not necessary for you. Failing to honor God by not worshipping him on Sundays. Neglecting regular prayer.
- **Arrogance:** Being argumentative, stubborn, opinionated instead of gracious and recognizing the worth in your peers.

Anger

Anger seeks to retaliate against threats to our self and avenge any insult. One should try to discern the cause of angry feelings.

- **Resentment:** Are you not satisfied with your talents and opportunities? Resentment can come from refusing to accept and fulfill God's vocation on our life. Do you seek to escape from reality? Do you assign blame to God, your family, society, or others? Hatred of God, cynicism, and grumbling are manifestations to be addressed.
- **Physical Anger:** Attacking others in anger. Have you hit, cursed, or insulted? Holding grudges. Hurting someone's reputation, bickering, nagging, or being rude.
- **Retaliation:** Taking vengeance for wrongs whether real or imagined. Has a response been excessive or harsh?
- **Unwillingness:** Refusing to love, to do good, think well of, or pray for others, especially our enemies.

Envy

Wanting for what you do not have. This comes from a dissatisfaction with your place in the order of God's creation. When others have been blessed, how do you respond?

- **Jealousy:** Getting upset or taking offense at the talents, success, or good fortune of others. Have you been angry with the blessings of other people? Did you find joy when someone struggled? Did you make someone feel unimportant?
- **Malice:** Making false accusations, slandering, or going behind someone's back. Did you seek out or continue gossip? Did you criticize unnecessarily even if it might be true? Were you deliberately annoying, teasing, or bullying?
- **Contempt:** Did you scoff or scorn at someone's virtue, ability, shortcomings, or failings? Did you consider others inferior? Did you mock or deride persons, ideals, or institutions?

Avarice

The unnecessary quest for wealth and material things. This could happen by taking advantage of other people or seeking status or power at other people's expense.

- **Excessive Ambition:** The pursuit of status, power, influence, reputation, wealth, or possessions at the cost of other obligations or other people. Being ruthless or unfair in business or relationships. Putting yourself above God and your family.
- **Misalignment.** Prioritizing money over God and family. Working to excess. Making a career a higher priority than God or family.

Gluttony

The overindulgence of food and drink, and by extension the inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort.

- **Intemperance:** Overindulgence in food, drink, smoking, or other physical pleasures.
- **Fastidiousness:** Fussiness, demanding excessively high standards.
- **Lack of Discipline:** Negligence in keeping the days of fasting or abstinence, or failure to use other needed means of self-discipline.
- **Neglect of bodily health:** Not getting sufficient rest, recreation, exercise or wholesome nourishment. Failure to use or to cooperate with available medical care.

Lust

The misuse of sex for personal gratification, debasing it from the holy purpose for which God has given it to us.

- **Unchastity:** Violation of the Church's marriage laws. Lack of consideration for one's partner in the marital relationship. Refusal to fulfill the purpose of Holy Matrimony in the bringing forth and giving adequate care to children, or to take our full share in the responsibilities or work involved.
- **Unfaithfulness to one's spouse:** Sexual indulgence outside marriage, in thought or act, alone or with others.
- **Immodesty:** Stimulation of sexual desire in others by word, dress, or actions. Engaging in impure conversations or actions.
- **Pornography:** Reading, pictures, videos, or fantasies. Entertaining impure thoughts.

Sloth

The refusal to respond to our opportunities for growth, service or sacrifice.

- **Laziness:** Avoiding our spiritual, mental or physical duties, or neglect of family, business or social obligations or courtesies. Procrastination of disliked tasks. Busyness or triviality to avoid more important commitments. Devotion of excessive time to rest, recreation, amusement, television, or the like. Waste of employer's time, or shoddy or inadequate work.
- **Indifference:** Unconcern over injustice to others, especially that caused by currently accepted social standards; or unmindfulness of the suffering of the world. Failure to become adequately informed on the Christian principles surrounding contemporary societal issues.
- **Neglect:** Neglect of duties to state, church, or community. Failure to provide adequately for, or to treat justly those in our employ. Ignoring of needy, lonely or unpopular persons in our own families, or the parish family, or in the neighborhood; or unwillingness to minister to them. Insufficient attention to the religious and other needs of our family. Failure to fulfill our obligation of Christian missionary witness, or to take a full and informed part in the Body of Christ.

Preparation for Confession

Now that your examination of conscience is complete, you're ready for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Take the list you have made to a published confession time. If you've never made a confession before, or you're not familiar with the way it works, make sure to tell the priest that when you arrive for confession. He will help you. If there is something you are unsure of, make a note and ask the priest. He is there to help understand the difference between sin and things that are not sin. He is there to provide counsel and encouragement for you. His chief role is to make God's forgiveness known and real to you. The purpose of confession is forgiveness and not judgment.

When Are Confessions Available?

Confession times are every Saturday at 10:00am in the Chapel and by appointment with a priest. During Holy Week and before Christmas many other times are available.

Where Do I Go?

Confessions are normally heard in the Chapel. If someone is already making a confession, go into the Church and wait in the left transept right outside the Chapel door. When it is your turn, go into the Chapel and begin your confession at the Altar rail.



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