

Reconciliation Today

The Church mandates that all baptised Catholics go for confession at least annually. Many see it as an obligation, and an opportunity to shake off any feelings of guilt over wrongdoing. This is unfortunate because the primary focus in such an instance is on oneself, rather than on reconciliation with God and others.

Reconciliation has been likened to a car wash and wax, but it is really more akin to a full tune-up. Aside from a good clean-and-shine, the sacrament helps us fix the brakes on our sinful tendencies, while a thorough Examination of Conscience helps us look very carefully under the bonnet for anything amiss.

Sin is often secret, yet it is never a private affair. When we sin, we offend God, hurt ourselves and the Church, which is like a body (Eph 5:23). When one member suffers, the whole body suffers, hence the need to repent before God and reconcile with the Church through the Sacrament of Confession.

Prayer is the best preparation for confession. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your sinfulness to you, and what God wishes you to repent of, and change. We discover our sins not by seeing how evil we are, but by seeing how good God is. Sincere prayer shows us our sins as clearly as God sees them. Review your life since your last confession, prayerfully searching your memories for what wrong you have done, or right that you have omitted to do. This is called an 'Examination of Conscience.' The 10 Commandments are a useful reference for this purpose (as are the Beatitudes).

*“And how will you find Jesus?
He has made it so easy for us.
‘Love one another as I loved you.’
If we have gone astray, we have the beautiful
sacrament of confession.
We go to confession a sinner full of sin.
We come from confession a sinner without sin
by the greatness of the mercy of God.
No need for us to despair.
No need for us to commit suicide.
No need for us to be discouraged –
no need, if we have understood
the tenderness of God’s love.
You are precious to Him.
He loves you, and He loves you so tenderly
that He has carved you on the palm of
His hand. These are God’s words written
in Scripture. You know that.
Remember that when your heart feels restless,
when your heart feels hurt, when your heart
feels like breaking – then remember,
‘I am precious to Him. He loves me.
He has called me by my name. I am His.
He loves me. God loves me.’
And to prove that love He died on the cross.”*

St Teresa of Calcutta, in
'Jesus, The Word to Be Spoken.'

Sacrament of Reconciliation



CHURCH OF
ST FRANCIS XAVIER
Disciples Making Disciples

Examination of Conscience

FIRST COMMANDMENT

"I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before Me." (Ex 20:2-3)

Do I give God the proper worship? How is my prayer life? How am I living up to my baptismal promises to reject sin and not be mastered by the glamour of evil? Do I have false gods in my life (money, work, pleasure, recreation, habits, etc) pursued at the expense of God and the sacraments? Is all that I do motivated first and foremost by a desire to love and serve God and my neighbour in the way that God wills me to?

Do I doubt or deny God's existence, his love for others or myself? Do I despair of or presume on God's mercy? Or deny a truth or teaching of the Church, or that I am Catholic? Did I receive communion in a state of mortal sin? Do I pray daily, study or meditate on God's Word regularly?

SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain." (Ex 20:7)

Do I have reverence for God's name? Did I ever speak His name in anger, blaspheme or insult Him, swear or use God's name carelessly? Did I curse or break an oath? Do I keep my word?

THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Remember that you keep holy the Sabbath Day." (Ex 20:8)

Am I faithful to my Sunday and other obligations, attending mass in full, and participating wholeheartedly? Do I set Sunday aside for rest and family? Have I truly repented of all my sins before approaching the altar for the Eucharist?

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Honour your father and your mother." (Ex 20:12)

Do I obey and respect my parents, elders and other persons in legitimate authority? Do I care for their material, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual needs? Have I been loving, patient and understanding with my children? Do I discipline them appropriately? Have I tried to impart my faith to them by word and example? Do I contribute to the peace and well-being of my family by offering my time, service and love? Do I use my positions of responsibility and authority for the good of others?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not kill." (Ex 20:13)

Have I killed or hurt anyone - physically, mentally or emotionally? Have I encouraged others, or been involved myself in sins against human life such as artificial insemination, contraception, in-vitro fertilisation, euthanasia, abortion? Do I use drugs or alcohol excessively? Have I exercised self-control in relation to food, drink, sexual desire? Do I have unresolved issues of hatred, anger or resentment, such that I seek not only justice but harm on another? Have I attempted suicide or seriously considered it?

SIXTH & NINTH COMMANDMENTS

"You shall not commit adultery." (Ex 20:14)

"You shall not covet your neighbour's wife." (Ex 20:17)

Am I completely faithful to my spouse, respecting him/her as an equal and not an object to an end? Was I married outside of the Church? Have I misused my sexuality by

fornication, masturbation, impure thoughts and fantasies?

Have I participated in indecent conversations or made use of pornographic entertainment, pictures or reading? Am I modest in dress? Have I incited others to sin by my own failures in these areas?

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

"You shall not steal." (Ex 20:15)

"You shall not covet your neighbour's goods." (Ex 20:17)

Have I taken what is not mine, no matter how small (including office stationery, illegal software etc) or destroyed property belonging to someone else? Have I accepted anything under false pretences, that I am not entitled to? Have I fulfilled my contracts, obligations and promises? Have I cheated, given or accepted bribes? Have I paid my employees just wages? Am I envious of the position, possessions, talents, and successes of others instead of being thankful for what I have and who I am? Do I give freely and generously of my time, talent and money to those in need and/or the Church?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour." (Ex 20:16)

Have I lied or sworn falsely or, by cowardly silence, avoided telling the truth? Have I gossiped or ruined anyone's reputation with slander? Did I fail to keep secret what should be confidential? Have I been honest in my dealings with people? Have I been boastful about myself or judgemental about others?