

The Examen: Examination of Conscience

A person's conscience is our most secret core and our sanctuary. There we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths. (*Catechism* #1776)

The Spiritual and moral life is about going forward, moving and growing. As you examine your heart, your conscience, are there any areas where you feel stuck or are even going backwards? You must confront and confess these issues in order to move. In addition, you must be honest enough to try to get to the roots. As you surrender your issues and sins to the Lord, you can *trust God* for mercy, gentleness and healing.

Some issues to think about:

- 1) **Anger:** Are you angry with others, circumstances, self or God? Is there bitterness, resentment and non-forgiveness in your heart? Do you manage your anger by “exploding” or “imploding”? Possible roots of anger are: Perfectionism, grasping for control, unrealistic expectations, family of origin.
- 2) **Relationships:** Is there someone you need to forgive? Can you ask for the courage to pray for them now? Is there someone you need to confront about their behavior? Ask for the courage to do so and to do it in a non-threatening way. Are you striving to love the irritating and “unlovely” people in your life? Or do you just avoid them?
- 3) **Codependency:** Do you allow the behaviors and emotions of others to control and manipulate you? Are you a people pleaser and live in fear of what others think all the time? Do you stand up for yourself? Are you true to yourself? Roots: insecurity, fear of rejection.
- 4) **Idols:** What “catches” your eye in life? Is it out of balance shopping, T.V., excessive Internet, gambling, food, drinking, sex, travel, sports, or work? Are you impulsive, compulsive, obsessive and out of control in any of these areas? What would being in balance mean in these areas? Roots: Low self-image/body image, boredom, lack of control, frustration with life, loneliness, self-sabotage. The need to escape from external and/or internal pain.
- 5) **Gossip:** Do you build relationships with others based on ungodly talk and slander? Control? Manipulation? Possible roots are the need for acceptance and approval from others. Belittling others to make yourself feel more important. Insecurity.
- 6) **Lust:** Do you watch programs on T.V., explore the Internet or read books that are inappropriate? Does this lead to unwanted behaviors? Possible roots: Longing for God shifted to lust. Lack of contentment stemming from the need for excitement. Lack of self-control and immaturity. Simple rebelliousness and flippant disregard.
- 7) **Laziness:** Are you lazy in areas of personal health, relationships, work, and seeking God? Roots: Lack of self-control and discipline, immaturity, low self-esteem, selfishness, lack of integrity.
- 8) **Pride:** Exaggerated self-importance. Are you stubborn, controlling, insensitive, cynical, contentious, opinionated and slow to say you were wrong? Do you judge others harshly simply by appearance? Pride denies and hides issues. It has a need to always be right. Humility admits, confronts and confesses. Roots: “I” Selfishness, negative self-image, fear and insecurity.
- 9) **Anything else?** Is there any other area that you need to confront and look at in order to experience healing, forgiveness and go forward? Look at your relationship with God, others and self. Try to think not just about your issues, but possible roots. God Bless you as you confront, face your pain, confess and move *forward!!*

ACT OF CONTRITION

Jesus, I am sorry for my sins.
Have Mercy on Me.
I surrender my life to you now.
I want to Go and not stay stuck.
Jesus take the wheel, Take control of my life!
I love you Lord Jesus. Amen!

In addition to an act of contrition (sorrow for our sins and for hurting God) we also receive a "penance" when we celebrate reconciliation. A penance is not a "punishment" for our sins. Rather, it is a means to help you to turn from sin and begin afresh with God. Reading the Bible has traditionally been given as a penance to help people to turn to Jesus and experience healing. Please pray this as your penance. As you read slowly this passage from **Psalm 51** (written by King David after he committed Adultery with Bathsheba) you will surrender to God:

~Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my guilt
and *cleanse* me from my sin.

~Behold, you desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean;
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

~Fill me with joy and gladness;
let the bones which you have broken rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquities.

~*Create in me a clean heart, O God,*
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

~O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
were I to give you a burnt offering,
you would not be pleased.

~The sacrifice acceptable to God
is a broken spirit;
a broken contrite heart, O God,
you will not despise. Amen.

***Based on Fr. Cedric's books *You Can Change* and *There is a Solution*