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AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

If you use this paper as a checklist for your sins, keep it confidential!

The First Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:2-5: cf. Deut. 5:6-9) I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them. (NT--Mt. 4:10) It is written: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

Have I lost my spiritual equilibrium? Have I inverted my values? Have I worshiped other gods? Have I called evil good? Have I ridiculed the absolute truth of God's Word?

The Second Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (NT--Mt. 5:33-34) You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "You will not swear falsely.... But I say to you, do not swear at all."

Have I failed to respect the Lord's name? Have I used profanity?

The Third Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:8-10; cf. Deut. 5:12-15) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. (NT--Mk. 2:27-28) The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Have I been neglectful in my public and regular worship of God on Sundays? Have I caused children, the disabled or the elderly to miss Mass? Have I failed to contribute to building up the Christian community in my own church parish? Have I engaged in work or other activities which hinder the worship I owe to God on this day? Have I rejected the time-honored values of my Church.

The Fourth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. (NT--Eph. 6:1-3; cf. Deut. 5:16) The Lord Jesus himself recalled the force of this "commandment of God." The Apostle teaches: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' (This is the first commandment with a promise.) 'that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.'"

Have I dishonored and disrespected my parents to whom I owe life even since I no longer owe them obedience as an adult? Have I thanked them and told them that I love them? Have I failed to discipline my children? Have I confronted racism, pedophilia, addictions, gambling, pornography, sexual problems and other issues that "run" in families so that these issues do not hinder my spouse and children?

The Fifth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:13; cf. Deut. 5:17) You shall not kill. (NT--Mt. 5:21-22) You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "You shall not kill: and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.

Have I unjustly killed anyone? Have I killed the unborn? Have I betrayed friends? Have I hated others? Have I held resentments?

The Sixth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18) You shall not commit adultery. (NT--Mt. 5:27-28) You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Have I enjoyed pornography? Have I committed adultery? Have I endorsed perversion? Have I abused others?

The Seventh Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:15: Deut. 5:19) (NT--Mt. 19:18) You shall not steal.

Have I exploited the poor? Have I neglected the needy? Have I rewarded laziness? Have I stolen?

The Eighth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:16; cf. Deut. 5:20) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (NT--Mt. 5:33) It was said to the men of old, "You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn."

Have I lied or cheated?

The Ninth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:17) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or

anything that is your neighbor's. (NT--Mt. 5:28) Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Have I coveted my neighbor's spouse or possessions?

The Tenth Commandment: (OT--Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21) You will not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's. . . . You shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's. (NT--Mt. 6:21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Have I polluted the earth? Have I ridiculed differences? Have I injured individual rights? Have I abused alcohol and drugs?

Having thought of your sins, go visit with a priest.

A. He will greet you with "Peace be with you". You may greet him and then say: "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (what period of time) since my last Confession or I have never done this before".

B. Simply speak about what brings you to ask for God's forgiveness from the sins that are uppermost in your heart and mind. Ask for the guidance of the priest in any areas you need help. Share what you plan to do with what you now understand God is calling you to do.

C. You will be invited by the priest to express your sorrow. Ideally you will express your sorrow in your own words. You can use an Act of Contrition that you recite from memory, but please say it slowly and mean it! Here is a great one children are being taught today:

"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."

D. Please accept the "Penance" offered to you by the priest. In this context it should be specific prayers that can be completed in a reasonable time this evening.

E. The priest will forgive your sins by the power of the Holy Spirit, not his, conferred on him at his Ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Listen carefully.