

This series of examinations can be found on the U.S. Bishops pages at the following addresses:

Examination of Conscience

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Let the Children Come: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Children

To Such Belongs the Kingdom

Jesus loved children. As a child himself, he was raised by Joseph and Mary in their home at Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:23). Growing up among relative and townspeople, Jesus experienced the concerns and problems common to all children, such as sickness and death among family members. Within this setting, Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:40).

Jesus’ affection for children is clearly affirmed in the Gospels. When his disciples attempted to halt people from bringing children to Jesus for his blessing, he insisted: “let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Mt 19:14).

Jesus also demonstrated his solicitude for children by healing them and raising them from death. He restored life to Jairus’ daughter (cf. Mk 5:21-43; Mt 9:18-25; Lk 8:41-56) and the son of the widow of Nain (cf. Lk 7:11-17). He healed an epileptic boy and the demon-possessed daughter of a Greek woman (cf. Mt 15:21-28, 17:14-18; Mk 7:24-30; Lk 9:37-43).

His fundamental concern was always for the spiritual development of children. The greatest gift which God the Father can give to anyone, including children, is faith in his only begotten Son. Jesus declared that the Father reveals his Son to children more readily than to the learned and clever (cf. Lk 10:21; Mt 11:25).

Recalling these examples of Jesus’ attention to children sets the proper context for helping children examine the conscience and preparing them for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament allows Jesus to express his love for children today. Through it, he continues to influence their lives; he demonstrates his power to heal them, to free them from the bondage of sin, and raise them to new life. In turn, this sacrament allows children to come to know and love Jesus. For these reasons, Jesus still exhorts us: “Let the children come!”

An Examination of Conscience for Children

Responsibilities to God:

Have I prayed every day?

Have I prayed my morning prayers and night prayers?

Have I prayed with my parents and family?

Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?

Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?

Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me do what is right?

Responsibilities to others:

Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?

Have I lied or been deceitful to them or to others?

Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?

Have I talked back to parents, teachers or other adults?

Have I pouted and been moody?

Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers, and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates?

Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?

Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?

Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?

Have I used bad language?

Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?

Have I performed my responsibilities, such as homework and household chores?

Have I been helpful and affectionate toward my family?

Have I been kind and generous with my friends?

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Good Teacher, What Must I Do?

One day a wealthy young man approached Jesus (cf. Mk 10:17-22; Mt 19:16-22; Lk 18:18-23). He asked, “‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: “you shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.”’ He said to him, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions” (Mk 10:17-22).

The young man had a good question. All young people ask similar questions about life’s meaning: “How can I be happy?” The probing questions of youth are always about life—life here on earth and ultimately, whether they realize it or not, life eternal. Only in Jesus, the “Good Teacher,” will young people find the authentic answer. Young men and women must learn this primary truth. Only God is worthy of our lives. If we have everything but do not know Jesus and his Father, we possess nothing of lasting value.

Jesus’ affection for the young man is striking: “Jesus, looking at him, loved him” (Mk 10:21). In truth, the Lord looks lovingly upon every young person without exception. The proof of his love is the cross, for from the cross, God’s “look of love” reached a new depth. This is Pope John Paul’s hope for youth:

May you experience a look like that! May you experience that truth that he, Christ, looks upon you with love, Jesus’ love!... My wish for each of you is that you may discover this look of Christ, and experience it in all its depth... Man needs this loving look. He needs to know that he is loved, loved eternally and chosen from eternity” (Letter to Youth, n. 7). Jesus said to the young man, “Come, follow me” (Mk 10:21).

Christ’s invitation to youth today is the same. There is no greater or more glorious call. Being a follower of Jesus, being a Christian, is the greatest of privileges, the most distinguished pursuit.

He Had Great Possessions

The sad truth is that despite Jesus’ loving invitation, the young man turned away. How many young people in the world today are on the brink of turning away from Jesus? How many already have? Our society is full of the sad, confused, and tormented faces of young people who do not know Jesus’ look of love. Why is this so? The problem is deeply embedded in fallen human nature. Because teens share this fallen nature, the budding energy and force that characterize adolescence create a powerful momentum which expresses itself in new and destructive forms. The phrase “great possessions” can have different levels of meaning. The most obvious is great material wealth. In Western culture, children learn—from their earliest days—that money is essential for happiness and the joys of this life. This passion is heightened in teenagers as all the worldly pleasures—expensive cars, beautiful homes, extravagant vacations, and glamorous clothes—are seductively set out before them. To many youth, the “good life” is the only dream that has any reality.

Youth itself is a treasure, a 'great possession.' Young people have a flair for living and relishing all the things life holds out to them. Yet youth can be wrongly treasured. Young adults can look upon their youth as a time for indulging their passions and desires. They are often urged to use their new-found freedom, potential and power in ways which are detrimental to their spiritual lives, such as in the misuse of sexuality, drugs, alcohol or entertainment. Their attitude can be that of the unreformed prodigal son who squandered his inheritance in his youthful arrogance and passion (cf. Lk 15:11-13).

Another 'great possession' that lures youth away from Jesus is the future. Many young adults believe that time is their most abundant possession. They have a whole life ahead of them. Death is but a distant blur in a seemingly endless future. Because of this, young people tend to guard their futures, selfishly. It is not seen as an opportunity to live the Gospel, but rather to pursue careers and material success. Or they can be consumed by the demands of finding and marrying the right partner. They chase after the future and judge their options solely from a worldly perspective.

Pope John Paul reminded young people: "Christianity teaches us to understand temporal existence from the perspective of the kingdom of God... without eternal life, temporal life, however rich, however highly developed in all respects, in the end brings nothing other than... death" (Letter to Youth, n. 5).

Participating in the Sacrament

When teenagers participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they come face to face with the mystery of God's love. This sacrament helps them experience God's forgiveness firsthand. Hopefully, they will come to experience Jesus' "look of love." How is this love of God manifested?

1. Teenagers experience the freedom that comes from bringing their sin into the light of Christ (cf. Jn 3: 20-21). Everything inside a young person can cry out: "I don't want to go to confession!" This struggle is not unique to teenagers; it is common to everyone who has endeavored to bring his sin to the light. To speak openly about our sin grates on our fallen nature. Nonetheless, the Sacrament of Reconciliation enables all of us (including teenagers) to come safely into the light of Christ's truth and experience his forgiveness. For young people it is the opportunity to experience freedom from nagging guilt and embarrassment. They are surely blessed by the cleansing of the Holy Spirit leading to an inner sense of peace. Hopefully, they will know the reality of St. John's words: "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin... If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:7-9).

2. The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps young adults to grasp that they are responsible for their lives, for how they think and act. They are obliged to examine how their words and actions have hurt and offended others, and how their lives do or do not reflect God's standards. This sacrament forces them to see that they are not isolated individuals but members of the body of Christ and the human family. Their sin injures that body and violates the integrity of others. The Sacrament of Reconciliation accentuates the communal nature of our sinfulness and reconciliation.

3. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit, empowering young people to live holy lives. John's words to young people can become a reality. He exhorted them: "I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one... I write to you,

young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 Jn 2:13-14).

Through the actions of Jesus, by the power of his Spirit, young men and women can conquer sin in their lives. Jesus breaks the hold Satan has gained over them through the lust of their eyes and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn 2:16). We should not underestimate the spiritual effect that regular participation in this sacrament can have on teenagers.

4. By participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, young people implicitly, if not explicitly, recommit their lives to the Gospel. The teenager is saying, “I want to turn away from sin. I want to strive once more to live by God’s commands, I want to live under his authority. I desire the power and life of Jesus’ Holy Spirit to be active in my life.” Obviously, young people, like all of us, may fail and sin again; nevertheless, rededication is essential for spiritual growth. Jesus is pleased when we renew our commitment to him and to his Gospel.

An Examination of Conscience for Young Adults

Responsibilities to God:

Have I gone to Mass on Sunday or have I rebelled and been stubborn about going to Mass?

Did I participate in the Mass or did I daydream?

Have I prayed every day?

Have I read the Bible?

Have I been rebellious toward God and his commands?

Have I misused the name of God by swearing and cursing?

Have I told the Father that I love him for creating me and making me his son/daughter?

Have I thanked Jesus for becoming man, dying for my sin and rising to give me eternal life?

Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me conquer sin and temptation and to be obedient to God’s commands?

Responsibilities to others and myself:

Have I been rebellious, disobedient or disrespectful to my parents, teachers and those in authority over me?

Have I lied to or deceived my parents or others?

Have I been arrogant and stubborn?

Have I talked back to my parents or those in authority?

Have I gotten angry or nurtured and held grudges and resentments? Have I refused to forgive others? Have I cultivated hatred?

Have I engaged in sexual fantasies? Have I looked at others lustfully?

Have I read pornographic literature or looked at pornographic pictures, shows or movies?

Have I masturbated?

Have I lustfully kissed or sexually touched someone? Have I had sexual intercourse?

Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have one?

Have I gossiped about others? Have I slandered anyone? Have I told lies about others? Have I mocked or made fun of others?

Have I lied or cheated? Have I stolen anything? Have I paid it back?

Have I been selfish or spiteful toward others? Have I been jealous?

Have I gotten drunk, or taken drugs?

Have I participated in anything that is of the occult: ouija boards, fortune tellers, séances, channeling, astrology?

Have I been patient, kind gentle and self-controlled?

When my conscience told me to do something good, did I do it or did I ignore it?

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Cast Your Cares upon the Lord: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Single People

Many adults in our world today are single. Some of these have chosen to be single either for religious reasons (they wish to serve the Lord, the Church or their aging parents) or for secular reasons (their career and work makes marriage difficult). Others have not specifically chosen to be single, but find themselves so either because they have not yet found a spouse, or they are separated or divorced, or their spouses have died. Whatever the reasons or circumstances the Father loves those who are now living single lives. He wishes to bless their lives and to bring to their lives in a deep peace and joy.

The Temptations of the Single

The temptations that single men and women face are, for the most part, similar to those encountered by married men and women. Everyone, for example, is tempted by selfishness, impatience, resentment and anger.

Yet singles are more susceptible to some temptations. Self pity, for example, is a temptation that single men and women need to watch closely. Because they can more easily feel lonely, vulnerable and unprotected, single men and women can feel sorry for themselves because of their state of life. They may become depressed. Divorced men and women can also fall prey to self-pity because of the seemingly hopeless circumstances of their lives. Widows and widowers are frequently gripped with self-pity.

Then too single men and women, especially those separated and divorced, often need to be healed of past hurts, resentments, bitterness, and anger. The unhappy memories of a previous marriage can still be painful. Nonetheless, even if past mistakes were made and sins were committed, the Lord

Jesus wants to pour out his mercy and compassion. He does not want them to live in frustration and anger. He wants everyone to know his love and peace.

For singles, sexual temptations can be a vexing and discouraging problem. Single men and women need to shepherd their emotions, fantasies and imagination. Like all adults, they must stay clear of sexually explicit literature and entertainment. Even though single men and women can be

sexually tempted, the Lord does not wish their sexual abstinence to be an oppressive burden. His desire is that they be mature, free sons and daughters of the Father.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation can help single men and women combat sin and live joyful lives in the presence of the Lord. They need not be overwhelmed by loneliness nor engulfed with hopelessness. God treasures single men and women and has a plan for their lives.

An Examination of Conscience for Single Persons

Responsibilities to God:

Have I gone to Mass every Sunday? Have I participated at Mass or have I daydreamed or been present with a blank mind?

Have I prayed every day (15-20 minutes)?

Have I read the Bible? Have I studied the truths of our faith and allowed them to become more a part of the way I think and act? Have I read any spiritual books or religious literature?

Have I told God that I want to love him with my whole heart, mind and strength? Do I hold any resentments toward God?

Have I recognized my need for Jesus and his salvation? Have I asked the Holy Spirit to empower me to live the Christian life?

Have I been financially generous to the Church? Have I participated in parish or religious activities?

Have I held resentments toward the Church or Church authorities? Have I forgiven them?

Responsibilities to others and to myself:

Have I been rebellious, disobedient or disrespectful to anyone in authority?

Have I lied to or deceived others—friends, boss, or coworkers?

Have I been arrogant and stubborn?

Have I gotten angry or nurtured and held grudges and resentments?

Have I refused to forgive others—parents, relatives, employers, former friend, a former spouse? Have I cultivated hatred?

Have I felt sorry for myself or nurtured self-pity?

Have I engaged in sexual fantasies? Have I looked at others lustfully?

Have I read pornographic literature or looked at pornographic pictures, shows or movies?

Have I masturbated?

Have I lustfully kissed or sexually touched someone? Have I had sexual intercourse?

Have I had an abortion or encouraged another to have one?

Have I gossiped about others? Have I slandered anyone? Have I told lies about others? Have I mocked or made fun of others?

Responsibilities to society:

Have I been a Christian witness to those with whom I work or associate? Have I spoken to anyone about the Gospel and how important it is to believe in Jesus?

Have I allowed the Gospel to influence my political and social opinions?

Have I had a proper Christian concern for the poor and needy?

Have I paid my taxes?

Have I fostered or nurtured hatred toward my ‘political’ opponents, either local, national or international?

Have I been prejudiced toward others because of race, color, religion or social status?

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The Two Shall Become One: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Marriage

God calls most men and women to the married vocation. This is a great honor and an immense challenge. To fulfill this marvelous calling we need Christ's help; we need his Spirit's power.

Marriage: God's Great Plan

First, we must be convinced that God is the author of marriage and family life. Many people today consider marriage solely in terms of biology, sociology or culture. When marriage and family life are viewed in a merely naturalistic manner, they lose all reference to God and are no longer rooted in absolute values or founded upon divinely ordained truths. One result is that premarital sex, trial marriage, and cohabitation are commonplace today. Adultery, divorce, and remarriage are treated casually. "Pre-nuptial contracts" are becoming a popular way to take out economic insurance against a likely future divorce. Some go so far as to support homosexual 'marriages.' While this may be the prevailing "wisdom" of the world, we must look to the Bible, the Christian tradition, and the teaching of the Church to discover God's plan for marriage and family life.

Marriage between a man and a woman is at the heart of God's design for creation. In the first creation story we find man and woman as the crown of God's good creation. "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26-27). Moreover, God "blessed" them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28). Here God revealed that marriage, sexuality, and family life are not meant to be just biological and evolutionary phenomenon, but are integral to his purposes, part of his plan for the human race created in his own image and likeness.

The second creation story is more graphic. It depicts God forming man out of clay and breathing into him the breath of life (cf. Gen 2:7). When God placed the man in the Garden of Eden, he took note that "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (Gen 2:18). We are told very graphically how God formed woman from Adam's rib. Upon seeing her, Adam declared "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called woman, for out of man this one was taken" (Gen 2:23). Woman is man's designated helper, but this in no way undermines her dignity. Having been formed from Adam's rib, she, by design, is close to his heart and, as Adam himself acknowledged, she shares his very own nature. In God's plan, man and woman are complementary. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

Sin, Repentance and the Restoration of Married Life

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, preferring to be gods unto themselves, they devastated their life together as a married couple. No longer were they faithful and loyal. The effects of their sin have contaminated every marriage and family. Their own family bears witness to this truth. Cain killed his brother Abel (cf. Gen 4). Do we see what transpired because of sin? Marriage and family life, the centerpiece of God's work, became fragmented and broken.

The evil of the Fall should not blind us to God's love. He immediately promised a Savior (cf. Gen 3:15). This great work of redemption was accomplished in Christ Jesus. Our marriages and families can be healed and rejuvenated only if we participate in this new life. Pope John Paul II has stated: "the Church is deeply convinced that only by the acceptance of the Gospel are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family capable of being fulfilled" (Role of Christian Family in the Modern World, n. 3).

When a Christian couple enters marriage, they do so in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection. Through faith and baptism, they participate in a new life in Christ, in the covenant which was founded on the shedding of his blood. Thus, when a Christian couple stands before the altar, in company with the priest and witnesses, they are presenting themselves to God in union with Christ, as members of his body. They are saying to God: "We have been cleansed of our sin. As holy members of your Son's body, temples of the Holy Spirit, we approach your throne. As sharers in his covenant, we commit ourselves to one another, with you, Father, as our divine witness, to live together and to become one in heart, mind, and body."

The unbreakable covenant between a Christian husband and wife is possible only because they participate in Jesus' everlasting covenant. As partakers of the Holy Spirit, they can confidently commit themselves to one another, knowing that no sin can destroy the mutual promises.

Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of his graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning," that is, to the full understanding and the full realization of God's plan (Role of the Christian Family, n. 3).

Only if we are clear about the greatness of God's call in marriage and family life will we see the importance of our responsibilities, the way sin undermines these, and how the Sacrament of Reconciliation can restore familial relationships. We need not fear. Rather we should rejoice that Jesus has thought us worthy of so marvelous a calling as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. We can find great strength in his saving presence, power and life.

Called to Be Holy

The Second Vatican Council has emphasized that "all in the Church... are called to holiness" (Constitution on the Church, n. 39). Christian marriages are an essential means used by God to sanctify the members of Christian families.

"The sacrament of marriage is the specific source and original means of sanctification for Christian married couples and families" (Role of the Christian Family, n. 56). As married couples, we are to examine our lives in light of the responsibilities we have to God's call to holiness. These responsibilities are fourfold in nature: 1) to God; 2) to our spouse; 3) to our children; 4) to society at large. By rooting out sin and through the healing and empowering effects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we will be able to attain the holiness to which we are called.

An Examination of Conscience for Married Persons

Responsibilities to God:

Have I gone to Mass every Sunday? Have I participated at Mass or have I day dreamed or been present with a blank mind?

Have I prayed every day (15-20 minutes)?

Have I read the Bible? Have I studied the truths of our faith and allowed them to become more part of the way I think and act? Have I read any spiritual books or religious literature?

Have I told God that I want to love him with my whole heart, mind and strength? Do I hold any resentments toward God?

Have I recognized my need for Jesus and his salvation? Have I asked the Holy Spirit to empower me to live the Christian life, to be a proper husband/wife and parent?

Have I been financially generous to the Church? Have I participated in parish or religious activities?

Have I held resentments toward the Church or Church authorities? Have I forgiven them?

Responsibilities to my spouse:

Have I cared for my spouse? Have I been generous with my time? Have I been affectionate and loving? Have I told my spouse that I love him or her?

Have I been concerned about the spiritual well-being of my spouse?

Have I listened to my spouse? Have I paid attention to his other concerns, worries, and problems? Have I sought these out?

Have I allowed resentments and bitterness toward my spouse to take root in my mind? Have I nurtured these? Have I forgiven my spouse for the wrongs he or she has committed against me?

Have I allowed misunderstanding, miscommunication or accidents to cause anger and mistrust?

Have I nurtured critical and negative thoughts about my spouse?

Have I manipulated my spouse in order to get my own way?

Have I tried to bully or overpower my spouse?

Have I spoken sharply or sarcastically to my spouse? Have I spoken in a demeaning or negative way? Have I injured my spouse through taunting and negative teasing? Have I called my spouse harsh names or used language that is not respectful?

Have I physically abused my spouse?

Have I gossiped about my spouse?

Have I undermined the authority and dignity of my spouse through disrespect and rebelliousness?

Have I been moody and sullen?

Have I bickered with my spouse out of stubbornness and selfishness?

Have I lied or been deceitful to my spouse?

Have I misused sexuality? Have I used sexual relations solely for my own selfish pleasure? Have I been too demanding in my desire for sexual fulfillment? Have I been loving and physically affectionate in my sexual relations or have I used sexual relations in a way that would be demeaning or disrespectful to my spouse? Have I refused sexual relations out of laziness, revenge or manipulation?

Have I refused to conceive children out of selfishness or material greed? Have I used artificial means of contraception?

Have I had an abortion or encouraged others to have one?

Have I masturbated?

Have I flirted or fostered improper relationships with someone else, either in my mind or through words and actions?

Have I used pornography: books, magazines or movies?
Have I committed adultery?
Have I misused alcohol or drugs?
Have I been financially responsible?

Responsibilities to children:

Have I cared for the spiritual needs of my children? Have I been a shepherd and guardian as God has appointed me? Have I tried to foster a Christian family where Jesus is Lord? Have I taught my children the Gospel and the commandments of God?
Have I prayed with them?
Have I been persistent and courageous in my training and teaching? Have I disciplined them when necessary? Have I been lazy and apathetic?
Have I talked with them to find out their problems, concerns and fears? Have I been affectionate toward them? Have I hugged them and told them that I love them? Have I played or recreated with them?
Have I been impatient and frustrated with them? Have I corrected them out of love in order to teach them what is right and good? Have I treated them with respect? Have I spoken to them in a sarcastic or demeaning way?
Have I held resentments against them? Have I forgiven them?
Have I been of one heart and mind with my spouse in the upbringing of the children? Or have I allowed disagreements and dissension to disrupt the training, educating and disciplining of our children?
Have I undermined the role of authority in the eyes of my children by speaking negatively against God, the Church, my spouse or others who hold legitimate authority over them?
Have I been a good Christian witness to my children in what I say and do? Or do I demand one standard for them and another for myself?
Have I been properly generous with my children regarding money and physical and material well-being? Have I been miserly? Have I been extravagant, thus spoiling them?

Responsibilities to society:

Have I been a Christian witness to those with whom I work or associate? Have I spoken to anyone about the Gospel and how important it is to believe in Jesus?
Have I held resentments and anger against those with whom I work, relatives or friends? Have I forgiven them?
Have I been unethical in my business dealings? Have I stolen or lied?
Have I allowed the Gospel to influence my political and social opinions?
Have I had a proper Christian concern for the poor and needy?
Have I paid my taxes?
Have I fostered or nurtured hatred toward my “political” enemies, either local, national or international?
Have I been prejudiced toward others because of race, color, religion or social status?

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Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- Do I respect the life and dignity of every human person from conception through natural death?
- Do I recognize the face of Christ reflected in all others around me whatever their race, class, age, or abilities?
- Do I work to protect the dignity of others when it is being threatened?
- Am I committed to both protecting human life and to ensuring that every human being is able to live in dignity?

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

- Do I try to make positive contributions in my family and in my community?
- Are my beliefs, attitudes, and choices such that they strengthen or undermine the institution of the family?
- Am I aware of problems facing my local community and involved in efforts to find solutions? Do I stay informed and make my voice heard when needed?
- Do I support the efforts of poor persons to work for change in their neighborhoods and communities? Do my attitudes and interactions empower or disempower others?

Rights and Responsibilities

- Do I recognize and respect the economic, social, political, and cultural rights of others?
- Do I live in material comfort and excess while remaining insensitive to the needs of others whose rights are unfulfilled?
- Do I take seriously my responsibility to ensure that the rights of persons in need are realized?
- Do I urge those in power to implement programs and policies that give priority to the human dignity and rights of all, especially the vulnerable?

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- Do I give special attention to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in my community and in the world?
- Am I disproportionately concerned for my own good at the expense of others?
- Do I engage in service and advocacy work that protects the dignity of poor and vulnerable persons?

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

- As a worker, do I give my employer a fair day's work for my wages? As an owner, do I treat workers fairly?
- Do I treat all workers with whom I interact with respect, no matter their position or class?
- Do I support the rights of all workers to adequate wages, health insurance, vacation and sick leave? Do I affirm their right to form or join unions or worker associations?
- Do my purchasing choices take into account the hands involved in the production of what I buy? When possible, do I buy products produced by workers whose rights and dignity were respected?

Solidarity

- Does the way I spend my time reflect a genuine concern for others?
- Is solidarity incorporated into my prayer and spirituality? Do I lift up vulnerable people throughout the world in my prayer, or is it reserved for only my personal concerns?
- Am I attentive only to my local neighbors or also those across the globe?
- Do I see all members of the human family as my brothers and sisters?

Care for God's Creation

- Do I live out my responsibility to care for God's creation?
- Do I see my care for creation as connected to my concern for poor persons, who are most at risk from environmental problems?
- Do I litter? Live wastefully? Use energy too freely? Are there ways I could reduce consumption in my life?
- Are there ways I could change my daily practices and those of my family, school, workplace, or community to better conserve the earth's resources for future generations?

Examination of Conscience for Priests & Religious

Fr. Thomas Weinandy

For the Sake of the Kingdom: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Priests and Religious

Priests and religious dedicate their lives to the service of the Gospel for the sake of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt 19:12). Despite their sinfulness and human frailty, God has honored them with a high calling. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is immensely important in the lives of priests and religious for it helps sustain and nourish their calling and commitment. It holds them accountable for the vocation and graces the Lord has given them. Also, through this sacrament, priests and religious take responsibility for their lives before God and his Church.

Responsibilities to God:

- Have I participated at Mass or have I daydreamed or been present with a blank mind? If a priest, have I said Mass with reverence and attention?
- Have I been faithful in praying the Liturgy of the Hours?
- Have I participated in community prayer and been faithful to daily personal prayer and meditation?
- Have I read the Bible?
- Have I studied the truths of our faith and allowed them to become more part of the way I think and act?
- Have I read any spiritual books or religious literature?
- Have I told God that I want to love him with my whole heart, mind, and strength? Do I hold any resentments toward God?
- Have I recognized my need for Jesus and his salvation?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to empower me to live the Christian life?
- Have I held resentments toward the Church or Church authorities? Have I forgiven them?
- Have I participated in anything that is of the occult (New Age): Ouija boards, fortune tellers, séances, channeling, astrology?

Responsibilities to promises and vows:

- Have I been faithful to the promises and vows I have made to God?
- Have I been rebellious, disobedient or disrespectful to those authority over me—the Pope, bishops, superiors?
- Have I caused others to be disrespectful to those in authority?
- Have I been faithful to the truth of the Gospel and the teaching of the magisterium?
- Have I preached and witnessed to the Gospel, or have I compromised it in some manner?
- Have I engaged in sexual fantasies? Have I looked at others lustfully? Have I read pornographic literature or looked at pornographic pictures, shows or movies? Have I masturbated?
- Have I flirted with anyone? Have I lustfully kissed or sexually touched someone? Have I had sexual intercourse?
- Have I allowed the things of this world to captivate my heart and mind?
- Have I used things or spent money not in keeping with Gospel poverty? Have I witnessed to Gospel poverty in my ministry?
- Have I desired to identify with the rich rather than with the poor? Does my life—how I think, speak and act—bear witness to the reality and primacy of heaven and eternal life?

Responsibilities to my ministry

- Have I fulfilled my pastoral responsibilities with attention and care?
- Have I been half-hearted, lazy or cynical in my ministry?
- Have I been sarcastic and negative toward those with whom I work or with those that I serve?
- Have I been loving, patient, kind, gentle, and self-controlled? Do I
- Have a real care for God's people, desiring their salvation and eternal life? When my conscience to me to do something in relationship to my ministry, did I do it or did I ignore it?
- Have I allowed business to control my life?
- Have I overworked, not taking time for exercise, relaxation, prayer, and reading?

Responsibilities to others:

- Have I lied to or deceived others?
- Have I been arrogant and stubborn?
- Have I gotten angry, nurtured and held grudges and resentments?
- Have I refused to forgive others?
- Have I cultivated hatred?
- Have I gossiped about others—in my religious community or parish?
- Have I slandered anyone?
- Have I told lies about others?
- Have I mocked or made fun of others?
- Have I lied or cheated?
- Have I stolen anything?
- Have I paid it back?
- Have I been selfish or spiteful toward others?
- Have I been jealous?
- Have I gotten drunk or taken drugs?

Responsibilities to society:

- Have I born witness, in word and deed, to the social implications of the Gospel?
- Have I allowed the Gospel to influence my political and social opinions?
- Have I had a proper Christian concern for the poor and needy?
- Have I been unethical in my business dealings?
- Have I stolen or lied?
- Have I paid my taxes?
- Have I fostered or nurtured hatred toward my social or political enemies either local, national or international?
- Have I been prejudiced toward others because of race, color, religious or social status?

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