

Frank, Henry
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A GUIDE

for Confession

By The REV. HENRY FRANK, S.T.B.

A GUIDE FOR CONFESSION

BY
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INTRODUCTION

When preparing for confession, we should implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit that we may be able to know the condition of our soul, sincerely repent of all our sins, make the firm resolution never wilfully to offend God again, truthfully confess our wilful transgressions, and willingly perform the penance to satisfy God for the temporal punishment still due to our sins.

If it has been a long time since we made our last valid confession, we should ask the priest in the tribunal of mercy to guide us in making a good confession. He will never refuse to help us.

Our examination of conscience on the day of our confession can easily be simplified if we ask ourselves every evening before retiring, whether we have offended God during the day in thought, desire, word, action, or omission. A daily review of the state of our soul makes it possible to remember more readily the number of sins committed, and it helps us to ascertain more definitely the causes of our evil habits, and the means we should employ to eradicate them.

When we examine our conscience, we should be neither too hasty, nor too superficial; we should not permit ourselves

to be controlled by self-love; and we should always avoid excessive anxiety and carelessness. If we are candid in the examination, we need never be worried about the confession we make. Even if it should happen that we did not recollect some grievous sin, it is considered as included in the confession we make, and it is remitted with the sins confessed. In our next confession we need only include this particular sin, without repeating the last confession in its entirety.

The questions listed under each of the Ten Commandments, and each of the Six Precepts of the Church refer to the minimum requirements demanded by God of us, if we wish to attain Heaven.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY GHOST

(To be profitably recited previous to the examination of conscience)

Come Holy Ghost, Spirit of Love and Dispenser of all graces; help me to receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily; help me to make a careful examination of conscience that I may know all my sins; touch my heart that I may hate and detest my sins and make a firm resolution to avoid them; assist me to make a sincere, entire and truthful confession of them to the priest, Thy representative, and thus obtain forgiveness and Thy grace and love. All this I ask of Thy goodness and mercy through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer and Savior. Amen.

AN ACT OF FAITH

O my God! I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; I believe that the Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

AN ACT OF HOPE

O my God! relying on Thy infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Thy grace,

and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

AN ACT OF LOVE

O my God! I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art all good and worthy of all love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

NOTE—*The first list of questions is a guide to penitents who frequently receive the Sacraments.*

Did I make a good confession the last time?

Did I forget a grievous sin in the last confession?

Did I purposely conceal a mortal sin in any of my former confessions and never mentioned this?

Did I perform the penance imposed upon me by my confessor the last time?

Did I make the requested restitution?

Have I avoided the proximate occasion of mortal sin?

If I have committed any grievous sins during the time since I made my last good confession, I must now recall them to mind.

If, at this time, I have only venial sins to confess, I might include a mortal sin of one of my former confessions.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

First Commandment

Have I wilfully doubted things revealed by God?

Have I refused to be resigned to God's holy Will?

Have I performed my prayers or other religious exercises in a hurried, careless and distracted manner?

Have I conducted myself irreverently in the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament?

Have I been ashamed of my religion through human respect?

Have I consulted the Ouija-board or fortune-tellers?

Have I taken part in non-Catholic services?

Second Commandment

Have I used God's Name irreverently?

Have I asked God to send sickness, financial losses or death to my neighbor?

Have I criticized God's mercy or justice?

Have I spoken in a disrespectful manner of those consecrated to God, of sacred places or articles of devotion?

Have I used profane language?

Third Commandment

Have I, through my fault, missed Holy

Mass on Sundays or Holydays of obligation?

Did I, through my fault, enter the Church after the Gospel of the Mass on these days?

Have I performed unnecessary servile work on these days, and how long?

Fourth Commandment

Have I been disrespectful to my parents?

Have I disobeyed them?

Have I shamefully abandoned my parents in their old age, sickness or poverty?

Have I refused to obey the order of my lawful superiors?

Have I taught my children their prayers?

Have I guarded them against evil-minded companions?

Have I supervised their reading and amusements?

Fifth Commandment

Have I neglected my health, or endangered my life?

Am I guilty of eating, or of drinking intoxicating liquors, immoderately?

Have I destroyed human life at its very origin?

Have I wilfully entertained thoughts of

jealousy, aversion, resentment or contempt for others?

Have I provoked others to anger?

Have I been discontented and wished myself dead?

Have I yielded to impatience, or irritability in word or deed?

Sixth Commandment

Have I been true to my marriage partner?

Am I guilty of sinful dancing?

If I am single, have I committed impure acts with others or with myself?

Have I sinfully caressed a person to whom I am not married?

Am I guilty of impure speech or looks?

Seventh Commandment

Have I stolen money?

Have I purchased anything for which I could never pay?

Have I borrowed money and made no effort to repay?

Have I cheated by giving false weight, damaged goods, short measure, or inadequate labor for money agreed upon and received?

Have I, through my extravagance or waste, rendered myself unable to satisfy my creditors?

Eighth Commandment

Have I told lies which caused injury to my neighbor?

Have I told a falsehood to spare myself some embarrassment?

Have I judged, or suspected others rashly?

Have I wilfully entertained unkind thoughts about my fellow-beings?

Have I made uncharitable remarks about them?

Have I, without necessity or reason, revealed a secret defect in my neighbor's character?

Ninth Commandment

Did I wilfully entertain impure thoughts?

Did I give full consent to impure desires?

Tenth Commandment

Have I desired to acquire my neighbor's property unjustly?

Have I schemed to enrich myself unjustly?

Have I dismissed all thought of ever repaying what I owe?

Have I given more thought to my profits than to the welfare of my immortal soul?

THE SIX PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

The Six Precepts of the Church, like the Ten Commandments of God, are not mere counsels; they bind in conscience, so that those who deliberately violate them are guilty of sin. The gravity of the sin depends upon the gravity of the matter involved in the transgression. However, it must be remembered that whereas the Ten Commandments of God bind all human beings; the Six Precepts of the Church bind those only, who are baptized, for it is only by the reception of Baptism that a person enters the Church and becomes subject to its jurisdiction. The following are the Six Precepts of the Church:

First Precept:

To Hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation.

Have I missed Holy Mass on any Sunday or Holyday of obligation?

Do I know: that, in case of necessity, one can substantially satisfy the Precept of attending Holy Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation by hearing portions of two Masses—though not simultaneously—which together make up a complete Mass? This means that it is permissible to assist at one Mass up to

the Sanctus and at another Mass from the Sanctus to the end. However, it must be noted as an exception, that this rule does not apply if the Consecration is in one Mass and the Communion in another.

Second Precept:

To Fast and Abstain on the Days Appointed.

If I had to fast, did I violate this Precept slightly or in a grave matter?

If my children had to observe this Precept, did I make it possible for them to observe the law of fast or abstinence?

If I needed the necessary dispensation from keeping the Diocesan Lenten Regulations, did I obtain it?

Third Precept:

To go to Confession at least once a year.

Do I realize that the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year binds me under the penalty of mortal sin?

Do I appreciate the privilege of receiving the Sacrament of Penance in order to regain supernatural life, if I grievously offended God?

Do I realize that without supernatural life, that is, sanctifying grace, I cannot gain eternal **salvation**?

Fourth Precept:

To receive Holy Communion during the Easter season.

Do I know that I must receive Holy Communion within the prescribed time, namely, from the First Sunday of Lent to Trinity Sunday inclusive?

Do I realize that even though a person received Holy Communion immediately before, or after the Easter Season he would not fulfill this Precept?

Do I know that the deliberate omission of one's Easter duty is a mortal sin?

Have I admonished my children, or subjects of their obligation to receive Holy Communion during the prescribed time, if this warning were found necessary?

Fifth Precept:

To contribute to the support of the Church.

Have I neglected to contribute my just share of financial help towards my parish Church?

Have I given false reasons for my apparent inability to give financial help to my parish Church?

Sixth Precept:

To observe the Church's laws concerning Marriage.

Am I aware of the penalty of excom-

munication which Catholics incur who refuse to be married in the presence of their parish priest, or priest delegated, and two witnesses?

Have I warned my children against the spiritual dangers of mixed marriages?

AN ACT OF CONTRITION AND A FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT

O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

THE CONFITEOR

I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

NOTE—*Penitents who rarely confess, who are not well instructed, and who are advised to make a general confession would do well to ask themselves the following questions:*

First Commandment:

I Am the Lord Thy God—Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me (Exod. 20, 2-3)

Have I denied, or doubted the existence of a Supreme Being?

Have I refused to believe all that God has revealed?

Have I been over-confident, or unreasonably hopeful in obtaining God's forgiveness of my sins?

Have I believed that God has abandoned me, or excluded me from His saving grace?

Have I complained against the Providence of God?

Have I deliberately sought to remain ignorant of the doctrines that I must believe, the laws that I must obey, and the sacraments that I must receive in order to gain eternal salvation?

Have I read anything which caused me to belittle morality, or scoff at virtue?

Have I in my possession books or magazines which are on the "Index" of forbidden books?

Have I recommended forbidden books to others?

Have I entertained a flippant attitude towards religion?

Have I spoken in derision of the Church or her clergy?

Have I recognized the spiritual dangers of secret societies forbidden by the Church, and yet became a member of some forbidden lodge?

Have I neglected to inform myself of the spiritual dangers of Soviet Communism?

Second Commandment:

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain (Exod. 20, 7)

Have I used God's Name in anger or in a joke or in exclamations?

Have I pronounced the Name of Jesus irreverently?

Have I called upon God to curse my neighbor or his children or his possessions?

Have I asked God to witness as true what, in fact, was a lie?

Did I swear to something as being true, which was only uncertain?

Did I take a vow to do something without any intention of ever keeping the promise made to God?

Third Commandment:

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day—Thou shalt do no work on it (Exod. 20, 8-10)

Have I deliberately neglected to attend Holy Mass on Sundays or Holydays of obligation?

Have I been wilfully late at Holy Mass on these days?

Why do I omit to go to Holy Mass on these days?

Have I neglected to take my children, who have attained the use of reason, or my subjects to Holy Mass on these days?

Have I, without necessity, performed lengthy servile work on these days?

Fourth Commandment:

Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thou mayest be longlived upon the land (Exod. 20, 12)

Have I been disrespectful to my parents?

Have I ridiculed them, or incited them to anger and sadness?

Have I refused to assist my parents in their spiritual or material necessities?

Have I been disrespectful to my superiors, lay or ecclesiastical?

Have I criticized the just orders of my superiors?

If I am bound by the Vow of Obedience

have I been wilfully disobedient in small or grave matters ?

Have I urged my children or subjects to be faithful in receiving the Sacraments?

Have I provided for the religious instruction of my children?

Have I failed to encourage them to embrace that state of life to which they appear to be called by God?

Have I purposely overlooked the sinful tendencies of my children, or even permitted them to live in the proximate occasion of grievous sin?

Have I avoided everything that was considered harmful to the physical, mental or spiritual welfare of my children or subjects?

Have I kept in mind the danger that could easily have come to the unborn child?

Fifth Commandment:

Thou shalt not kill (Exod. 20, 13)

Have I committed an act that was deliberately intended to lead to my death?

Have I wilfully killed an innocent human being?

Have I avoided the danger of becoming a drug fiend?

If I am a drug fiend, am I determined to break away from this bad habit?

Have I been intoxicated?

Have I wilfully injured my own health?

Have I desired to take revenge?

Have I caused enmity amongst others?

Have I been envious? (Envy: fourth Capital sin).

Have I failed to control my violent temper?

Have I borne hatred?

Have I been unjustly angry? (Anger: sixth Capital sin.)

Have I permitted myself, or requested to be sterilized in order to escape conception?

Have I obstructed, or destroyed the life of an unborn child?

Have I procured, or only attempted to procure, permitted, or advised the expulsion of the human fetus, without consulting a Priest.

Do I realize that "all who effectively procure (direct) abortion, the mother included, incur the penalty of excommunication?" (Canon 2350, n. 1).

Am I guilty of having procured a miscarriage?

Have I requested, assisted, or advised a medical doctor to destroy the generative powers of any innocent without first consulting a Priest.

Have I promoted, or prescribed the use of Euthanasia, that is, the use of a certain drug which causes a painless death, known as "mercy-killing"?

Sixth Commandment:

Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exod. 20, 14).

Am I guilty of marital infidelity?

Have I abused matrimonial privileges by contraceptive practices?

Have I encouraged, advised, instructed married people to limit their offspring by a deliberate use of certain practices to prevent children to be born?

Have I sold contraceptives?

Am I engaged in a place where I am asked to sell contraceptives?

Have I, in my place of business, contraceptives for sale?

If I am single, have I committed acts of impurity with married, unmarried or related persons? (Lust: third Capital sin).

Have I committed an impure act with myself?

Have I influenced persons, through my bold, and daring behavior, to commit sins of impurity?

Is my dress suggestive, giving rise to impure thoughts, desires or acts?

Have I indulged in suggestive or lewd speech?

Have I listened with pleasure to immodest jokes, songs or stories?

Have I read obscene books, magazines, or gazed at immodest pictures?

Have I indulged in dangerous curiosity in sex matters?

Have I frequented places which were considered a proximate occasion of sins of impurity?

Have I protected my children or subjects against the danger of contracting habits of the sin of impurity?

Have I neglected my sacred duty of imparting necessary instruction on sex knowledge to my children who were entitled to have this information?

Seventh Commandment:

Thou shalt not steal (Exod. 20, 15).

Have I been dishonest and to what extent?

Have I induced others to cheat in business dealings?

Have I protected a thief?

Have I helped a thief by giving him instruments?

Have I purchased articles which I knew were stolen?

Have I contracted debts which I never intended to pay?

Have I refused to pay rent?

Have I plunged myself or others recklessly into debt?

Have I deprived my family of the necessities of life, through my reckless gambling or betting?

Have I eluded my creditors by false or

fictitious excuses to pay my honest debts?

Have I acted miserly towards those who are poor, through no fault of their own?

Have I refused to restore what rightfully belongs to others?

Have I neglected my obligation to repair the loss of property caused by me?

Am I willing to make the necessary restitution of money, or of property wrongfully acquired?

Eighth Commandment:

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor (Exod. 20, 16).

Have I deliberately told a lie to deceive somebody?

Have I besmirched the reputation of my neighbor, by making known his true but secret faults?

Have I revealed a secret which could not be made known without causing grave injustice to somebody?

Have I read others' letters and thereby violated their right to certain secrets?

Am I willing to make the necessary restitution for violating the reputation of another?

Have I gladly listened to detractors and approved of what they said?

Have I made use of a certain kind of mental reservation, which no one, however intelligent, could possibly under-

stand, in order to deceive somebody in a grave matter?

Ninth Commandment:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife (Exod. 20, 17).

If I am married, have I deliberately entertained thoughts, or desires of committing acts of impurity with either married, unmarried or related persons?

If I am single, have I taken wilful pleasure in thoughts of impurity?

If I am single, have I entertained deliberate desires to commit impure acts with others ?

If I am bound by the Vow of Chastity, have I wilfully harbored impure thoughts or desires?

Tenth Commandment:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house (Exod. 20, 17).

Have I begrudged others what they possess?

Have I wilfully entertained thoughts, or desires of stealing, defrauding, or damaging my neighbor's property? (Covetousness—second Capital sin).

Have I planned a fictitious excuse of my obligation to make restitution, if demanded of me?

If I am bound by the Vow of Poverty, have I sought to interpret this Vow to satisfy my selfishness?

PSALM 24

(A prayer for grace, mercy, and protection against our enemies)

To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul.

In thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed.

Neither let my enemies laugh at me: for none of them that wait on thee shall be confounded.

Let all them be confounded that act unjust things without cause.

Show, O Lord, thy ways to me, and teach me thy paths.

Direct me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art God my Savior; and on thee have I waited all the day long.

Remember, O Lord, thy bowels of compassion; and thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world.

The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember.

According to thy mercy remember thou me: for thy goodness sake, O Lord.

The Lord is sweet and righteous: therefore he will give a law to sinners in the way.

He will guide the mild in judgment: he will teach the meek his ways.

All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that seek after his covenant and his testimonies.

For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt

pardon my sin: for it is great.

Who is the man that feareth the Lord?
He hath appointed him a law in the way
he hath chosen.

His soul shall dwell in good things:
and his seed shall inherit the land.
The Lord is a firmament to them that
fear him: and his covenant shall be
made manifest to them.

My eyes are ever towards the Lord:
for he shall pluck my feet out of the
snare.

Look thou upon me, and have mercy on
me; for I am alone and poor.

The troubles of my heart are multi-
plied: deliver me from my necessities.
See my abjection and my labor; and for-
give me all my sins.

Consider my enemies for they are
multiplied, and have hated me with
an unjust hatred.

Keep thou my soul, and deliver me: I
shall not be ashamed, for I have hoped
in thee.

The innocent and the upright have ad-
hered to me: because I have waited
on thee.

Deliver Israel, O God, from all his tribu-
lations.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven,
have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,
have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Ghost,
have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God,
have mercy on us.

Holy Mary,

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of Virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of Divine grace,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother undefiled,

Mother most amiable,

Mother most admirable,

Mother of good counsel,

Mother of our Creator,

Mother of our Saviour,

Virgin most prudent,

Virgin most venerable,

Virgin most renowned,

Virgin most powerful,

Pray for us.

Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of Justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Spiritual vessel,
Vessel of honor,
Singular vessel of devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of Ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of Heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of Angels,
Queen of Patriarchs,
Queen of Prophets,
Queen of Apostles,
Queen of Martyrs,
Queen of Confessors,
Queen of Virgins,
Queen of all Saints,
Queen conceived without original sin.
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of peace,

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins
of the world,
spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins
of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins
of the world,
have mercy on us, O Lord.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

Let us Pray

Grant, O Lord God, we beseech Thee,
that we Thy servants may rejoice in con-
tinual health of mind and body; and
through the glorious intercession of the
Blessed Mary ever Virgin be freed from
present sorrow and enjoy eternal glad-
ness, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INSTRUCTION

We, who are accustomed to regard war and persecution, famine and pestilence, poverty and sickness, suffering and death, as great afflictions, forget that these calamities of life may be blessings in disguise, which the all-merciful God gives us in order to bring us nearer to Him. The only real evil in this world is *Sin*.

Grievous sin is, without doubt, the greatest evil that this world has ever known. By it we defy God and turn our backs on Him, to do our own will rather than His. Like a thief, it robs the soul of its supernatural life, without which Heaven cannot be attained, and it deprives the soul of all the merit of former good works.

Merit is that quality of our work for which we shall be rewarded in eternity. Besides the loss of sanctifying grace, grievous sin results in punishment both temporal and eternal. Mortal sin is to the soul what decay is to the body. As a destructive cancer ruins in our earthly frame all that it has of life and beauty, so mortal sin robs the soul of all that makes it fair and precious in the Eyes of God.

Venial sin cannot completely cut us off from God as mortal sin does, yet it can and does hinder our progress towards Him. Every deliberate sin, no matter

how small, is rebellion to Almighty God. Insults are measured by the dignity of the person insulted. We must realize that even a slight offense given to an infinite God is a very serious matter. Venial sin sickens the spiritual life of our soul. Just as sickness usually precedes death, so venial sins, as a rule, precede mortal sins.

Because sin is man's deliberate violation of the laws of God and of His Church, He only can forgive sin and He alone does. He might have willed to forgive all sins directly without any sacramental tribunal of grace, but He did not. On the contrary, He instituted the Sacrament of Penance, in which sins are forgiven, whenever the words of absolution are spoken by a priest over a sincerely disposed penitent. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance when He said to His Apostles, and to their successors through all the centuries: "Receive the Holy Spirit: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20, 22-23).

If the sinner, who grievously offended God after Baptism, can have recourse to this tribunal of grace, he must do so in order to gain Heaven. If, however, he cannot reach a priest to whom he may confess his grievous sins, he may

obtain the grace of reconciliation if he be heartily sorry for having offended God, Who is infinitely good in Himself, and worthy of all love. In this emergency, the truly repentant sinner must combine the willingness to go to confession whenever possible. No sin is too great for God to forgive. Of this He has assured us when He said in the words of Isaias the prophet: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." (Is. 1, 18).

God could punish the sinner, who has offended Him grievously, in order to put an end to his sinful life; that might be man's conduct toward an offending brother. God treats the sinner differently; He endures his rebellion and strives to withdraw him from the error of his ways. God said by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "As I live—I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." (Ezch. 33, 11).

To receive the Sacrament of Penance validly, the penitent must examine his conscience, be sorry for having offended God, make a firm resolution to avoid sin and what leads to sin, confess his sins to a priest, and accept the penance imposed upon him by his confessor.

Before beginning to examine his conscience, the penitent must remember that a superficial review of the state of his soul, since his last good confession, cannot atone for his sins. He knows that the person engaged in a law-suit will review it many times in order that no important item may escape his notice, that he will count as nothing, the days and even weeks spent in examining those parts of the civil law which he needs to present a successful case. If the penitent is wise and prudent in purely worldly matters, he will also search into the depths of his soul, and recall to mind the number of times that he has grievously offended God, since he received forgiveness of his sins, the last time. It may perhaps be difficult for him to know the gravity, the number, the attendant circumstances of all his mortal sins, but what is difficult for him is easy for the Holy Ghost, the Father of Lights. The penitent therefore will invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit that He may help him to know the true condition of his conscience.

Although God in His mercy forgives the sins submitted in the Sacrament of Penance, He cannot do otherwise than hate and detest sin. This must be the attitude of God toward sin. A convincing proof of His detestation of mortal sin

is the terrible punishment meted out to the rebellious Angels. Another evidence of God's hatred of mortal sin we see in the consequences of the punishment that Adam and Eve had to suffer, after their disobedience to God's holy Will. They were expelled from Paradise and were doomed to sickness and death. One more proof of sin's great malice is the fact that God alone could make fitting reparation for the sin of Adam and Eve. God, on account of His holiness and justice, cannot do otherwise than hate and punish sin.

God only can forgive a sinner, who like Himself hates and detests sin, and who is grieved for having offended his greatest Benefactor. Contrition is an indispensable condition for a valid confession. Without sorrow no sin can be forgiven. No forgiveness without contrition; is a rule which admits of no exception.

There are two kinds of Contrition: perfect and imperfect. "Perfect contrition is that which fills us with sorrow and hatred for sin, because sin offends God, Who is infinitely good in Himself, and worthy of love." "Imperfect contrition or attrition is that by which we hate what offends God, because by it we lose heaven and deserve hell.

It is not absolutely necessary to have perfect contrition when a sinner approaches the Tribunal of Penance; imperfect contrition or attrition is sufficient to make a worthy confession. It is very desirable to elicit acts of perfect contrition frequently. An act of perfect contrition is the surest means of obtaining the remission of unforgiven sins, which in an emergency cannot be confessed to a priest. It is the best substitute for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, in case one cannot be anointed in the hour of death.

The sorrow required for the forgiveness of sins must be accompanied by a readiness to avoid future mortal sins and its occasions, that is, the persons, places, or things, which from their own nature or from man's weakness, have been or may be the occasion of sins. A person who wishes to get rid of evil habits, but refuses to make use of the necessary means, is like an invalid who wants to regain health, but will not accept the medicines prescribed. The penitent's purpose of amendment must be serious and firm.

The practice of going to confession frequently has a wholesome influence on man's life. Bad habits are overcome by it; the danger of sin diminished, and a real incentive is given to lead a life of

virtue. The cause of sin is due to man's weakness; frequent confession turns this weakness into strength.

Every penitent knows from experience that the confession of his grievous sins together with their circumstances, may seem hard, and yet, if he is contrite of heart, he will declare them without concealing or palliating anything. He will obey the Church, teaching that "we must enumerate all the mortal sins of which we are conscious, accurately and humbly, with the number of times we have committed them, besides all that is necessary to make known the nature of the sin."

As soon as sacramental absolution has been imparted, the guilt of every sin confessed, the eternal punishment, which was incurred, if mortal sins were committed, and also part of the temporal penalty are remitted. Christ gave St. Peter and his successors the power to forgive the guilt of every sin and the eternal punishment when He said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John 20, 23).

To satisfy God for the temporal punishment still due to sins confessed, the priest imposes a certain penance upon the penitent. Since the penance given is trifling in proportion to his sins, the penitent should undertake voluntary mortifications to supply what is yet wanting

in the satisfaction, which God requires.

Apart from the Sacrament of Penance, the Church has been empowered to remit temporal punishment due to sin, after its guilt has been forgiven, by means of Indulgences. In granting an Indulgence to the living, the Church offers satisfaction to God from her treasury of merit, so that such an Indulgence is a real juridical absolution from temporal punishment. Indulgences for the souls in Purgatory are gained by way of intercession, that is, the Church offers satisfaction from her treasury of merit and asks God to apply this satisfaction to the souls lingering in Purgatory.

A *Plenary* Indulgence is the remission of the whole debt of temporal punishment. A *partial* Indulgence remits so much of the temporal punishment as would be remitted in performing the penances of the early ages of Christianity, which were generally quite lengthy, often taking months and years to perform them.

To gain an Indulgence it is necessary to be in the state of sanctifying grace. Besides complying with this most essential condition, the person wishing to gain an indulgence must faithfully carry out the other prescribed conditions.

CONSCIENCE

Conscience is a "judgment of the intellect, dictating what is to be done as morally right, or what is to be avoided as morally wrong," in the particular circumstances, in which one is placed.

"Conscience is said to be certain when it dictates something as right or as wrong, without experiencing any reasonable fear of the opposite being true.

"Conscience is doubtful when it is undecided which of two contradictory views is true. A fundamental law of theology decrees that a person is never allowed to act with a doubtful conscience. This means that one who seriously doubts the lawfulness of some action, and nevertheless performs it, commits sin. The same is true of one who doubts whether it is permissible to omit some action, and yet omits it. One who is in such a state of doubt and wishes to perform (or to omit, as the case may be) the action in question should first obtain certainty of conscience. When strict certainty cannot be obtained, it is sufficient to have moral certainty in the broad sense, namely: that which is based on arguments of probability.

"Conscience is erroneous, when it judges what is really wrong as right, or vice versa. When a person in good faith judges erroneously, that he is obliged to perform or to omit a certain act, then

he commits sin if he fails to perform or omit it, as the case may be. For the light of his own reason constitutes for every individual the ultimate subjective norm of his conduct; and God's rewards or punishments are meted out to every one, according as he has obeyed or disobeyed the voice of his own conscience." (The New Catholic Dictionary—pp. 248-249).

IF IN DOUBT, CONSULT A PRIEST

A scrupulous conscience is always erroneous. It is a dictate of the judgment based on scruples.

A scruple is defined as "an unfounded apprehension and consequent fear and anxiety that sin is committed where there is no sin at all, or that a sin committed was greater than, in fact, it was."

'Scrupulous penitents must accept the advice of a wise and prudent confessor, if they wish to receive the help they desire and need. The following rules of conduct for the scrupulous have been suggested by experienced spiritual directors:

1. The scrupulous person should convince himself that he is really scrupulous and that scruples do not necessarily lead to sanctity; that, therefore, he will make up his mind to attend to the health of both body and soul.

2. He should seek the guidance of one good confessor and not of many confessors. He should render obedience to his spiritual director.

3. He should be humble and resigned to God's will, looking upon Him as kind, generous and merciful, and he should frequently make acts of confidence and love.

4. He should be brief in examining his conscience and in stating his difficulties.

5. He should never give way to scruples on the plea that for once in a while it is better to have peace of mind than to continue resistance. The enemy grows stronger by every victory gained over the scrupulous.

6. He must boldly follow the advice given him, convinced that by so doing he cannot be committing sin.

7. After gaining a victory now and then, he should learn to rely upon his own judgment without frequent recourse to his confessor.

8. He should be thoroughly convinced that doubtful sin is not certain sin, and that he need not confess doubts but only certainties.

9. He should act as other good people. What is right for them is right for him. Therefore, he should not pry into his

motives curiously and persistently, but do what he is doing with speed and vigor.

10. When he is in doubt concerning his consent to evil thoughts, he may take it for granted that there was no consent. When in doubt about the quality of past confessions, he may assume that they were good. When in doubt about sufficient sorrow in confession, he may be assured that the very act of going to confession is, in his case, a sufficient act of sorrow. When in apprehension about final perseverance, he should say: "I will leave that to God. He will see to it. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped. I shall not be confounded for ever. I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me."

"The scrupulous person may well take any one of the proposed remedies without trying to use several. But if he should think that not even any one of them suits his case, he would be giving but one more manifestation of the exceedingly variable character of his conscience. Rather, he should persuade himself that all these rules, derived from the experience of confessors during many centuries, exactly suit his case, and he should proceed to act upon some of them without delay." (Moral and Pastoral Theology—Vol. I, pp. 76, 77. H. Davis, S.J.)

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