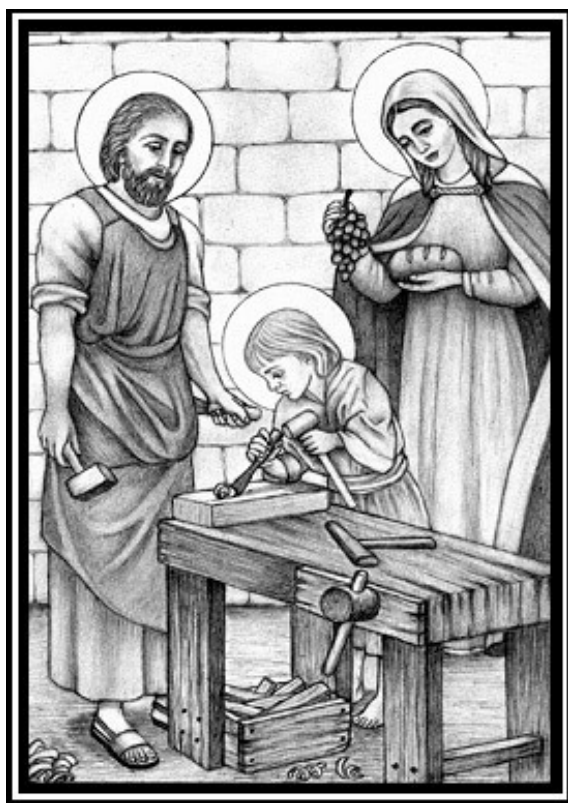


Attention Catholics

**Helpful Reminders for Catholics
Living in the Modern Confusion**



Attention Catholics

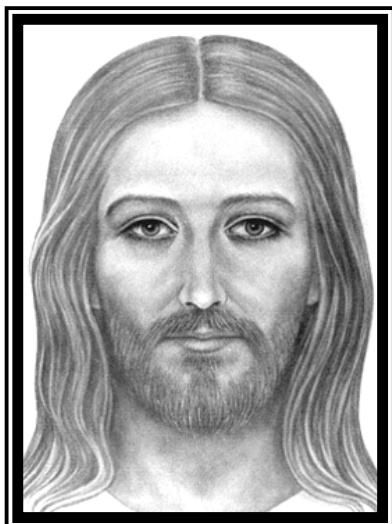
Dedicated to Kevin & Cindy

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INTRODUCTION

St. Francis of Assisi exhorted his brothers:

...I advise and admonish the friars that in their preaching, their words should be examined and chaste. They should aim only at the advantage and spiritual good of their listeners, telling them briefly about vice and virtue, punishment and glory, because Our Lord Himself kept his words short on earth. — Rule of 1223, Chapter 9.

This small booklet is a humble attempt to follow this advice in written form on various topics that need attention today.



Part I

Truths to Meditate on...

1. Death and Judgment

“...it is appointed unto men to die, and after this the judgment” (Heb.9:27).

Adam and Eve were created in a state of perfect happiness. They lived in the Garden of Eden where they enjoyed the preternatural gifts of infused knowledge, and freedom from sickness, suffering, death, and concupiscence (the tendency to sin). However, the Church also teaches that they were given another, greater gift, the supernatural gift of ***Sanctifying Grace*** which made them children of God and gave them a *right to Heaven*. When Adam sinned, he lost all these gifts. And he lost them not only for himself, but for all his descendents (*i.e.* the entire human race) since one cannot give what one does not possess. Therefore every child of Adam comes into this world deprived of all these wonderful gifts, including ***Sanctifying Grace***, which it is *necessary to possess* in order to enter into Heaven.

Fortunately, God sent his Son, Jesus (born of the Virgin Mary), into the world to suffer and die for us, which opened the way to Heaven again. One of the gifts that Our Saviour Jesus obtained for the Church through his suffering and death is the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism washes away Original Sin inherited from Adam (and all actual sins) and restores

Sanctifying Grace (our “ticket to Heaven”) making us adopted children of God. Therefore, through baptism, we regain our *right to Heaven*.

But we can again lose this “ticket to Heaven.” **Sanctifying Grace** is lost by committing just *one mortal sin*. Fortunately, Our Saviour Jesus also obtained for the Church the gift of the Sacrament of Penance. By making a *worthy* confession (See Section 8), **Sanctifying Grace** is restored and thus one regains his “ticket to Heaven.”

As Scripture teaches, you must die one day, and immediately after you will be judged. As you have seen, if you die without **Sanctifying Grace**, without your “ticket to Heaven,” you will go to Hell for all eternity. If you die possessing **Sanctifying Grace**, since you possess your “ticket to Heaven,” you are guaranteed to go to Heaven for all eternity (even if you are temporarily detained in Purgatory).

Therefore, what is of key importance for a happy judgment and thus a happy eternity is to possess **Sanctifying Grace** at the moment of death. Since death can come upon you any time “*as a thief in the night*” (1Thes. 5:2), and since “*of that day or the hour no man knoweth*” (Mk. 13:32), if you are wise, you will strive to remain habitually in the possession of **Sanctifying Grace**. This is best done by striving to love God above all things, which means keeping the Commandments and developing a healthy relationship with God through regular prayer. Frequently receiving the Sacraments *with proper dispositions* is an indispensable aid as well.

...Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

2. The Reality of Hell

“... if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire : Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished” (Mk. 9:42).

In our times, many who believe in Jesus have trouble believing in that place of eternal torment called Hell. It seems that for this reason God has deemed to reaffirm the reality of Hell through recent private revelations. The following is the testimony of God's “*Secretary of Mercy*,” St. Maria Faustina's (d. 1938) mystical visit to Hell:

Today, I was led by and Angel into the chasms of Hell. It is a place of great torture; how awesomely large and extensive it is! The kinds of

tortures I saw: the first torture that constitutes Hell is the loss of God: the second is perpetual remorse of conscience; the third is that one's condition will never change; the fourth is the fire that will penetrate the soul without ever destroying it — a terrible suffering, since it is purely spiritual fire, lit by God's anger; the fifth torture is continual darkness and a terrible suffocating smell, and, despite the darkness, the devils and the souls of the damned see each other and all the evil, both of others and their own; the sixth torture is the constant company of Satan; the seventh torture is horrible despair, hatred of God, vile words, curses and blasphemies. These are the tortures suffered by all the damned together, but that is not the end of the sufferings. There are special tortures destined for particular souls. These are the torments of the senses. Each soul undergoes terrible and indescribable sufferings, related to the manner in which each has sinned. There are caverns and pits of torture where one form of agony differs from another. I would have died at the very sight of these tortures if the omnipotence of God had not supported me. Let the sinner know that he will be tortured throughout all eternity, in those senses which he made use of to sin.

I am writing at the command of God, so that no soul may find an excuse by saying that there is no Hell, or that nobody has ever been there, and so no one can say what it is like.

I, Sister Faustina, by the order of God, have visited the abysses of Hell so that I might tell souls about it and testify to its existence. I cannot speak about it now (October 1936); but I have received a command from God to leave it in writing. The devils are full of hatred for me, but they had to obey me at the command of God. What I have written is but a pale shadow of the things I saw. But I noticed one thing: that most of the souls there are those that disbelieved that there is a Hell. When I came to, I could hardly recover from the fright. How terribly souls suffer there! Consequently, I pray even more fervently for the conversion of sinners. I incessantly plead God's mercy upon them. O my Jesus, I would rather be in agony until the end of the world, amidst the greatest sufferings, than offend You by the least sin.¹

Our Lord later spoke to St. Faustina of his immense desire to save souls from these eternal torments:

[Urge] all souls to trust in the unfathomable abyss of My mercy, because I want to save them all. On the cross, the fountain of My mercy was opened wide by the lance for all souls — no one have I excluded!²

Sister Lucy of Fatima describes the vision of Hell she saw on July 13, 1917 in this way:

...we saw as if into a sea of fire, and immersed in that fire were devils and souls with human form, as if they were transparent black or bronze

*embers floating in the fire and swayed by the flames that issued from them along with clouds of smoke, falling upon every side just like the falling of sparks in great fires, without weight or equilibrium, amidst wailing and cries of pain and despair that horrified and shook us with terror. We could tell the devils by their horrible and nauseous figures of baleful and unknown animals, but transparent as the black coals in a fire.*³

In her August apparition, Our Lady pleaded:

*Pray! Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell for not having someone to pray and make sacrifices for them.*⁴

Do not be fooled about who shall dwell in Hell for all eternity:

...the sins that bring most souls to Hell are the sins of the flesh.
(Blessed Jacinta of Fatima).⁵

And Scripture sternly warns:

Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers; nor the effeminate nor liars with mankind [practicing homosexuals] nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor railers nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of thy Mercy!

3. The Reality of Purgatory

“...the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. ...If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire” (1Cor. 3:13,15).

Yes, Purgatory exists. The Council of Trent taught *as a matter of Faith* that: (1) there is a state or condition after death called Purgatory and (2) Souls which are detained there may be helped by the prayers and good works of the faithful on earth.

In the Old Testament Book, 2nd Machabees, we read of Judas Machabeus sending “*twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead*” (His men slain in battle) since “*It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.*” (2 Mach. 12:43 & 46)

The following excerpts are taken from a booklet entitled “*An Unpublished Manuscript on Purgatory.*”⁶ This booklet consists of a collection of conversations of a certain Sr. M. de L. C. with a soul in Purgatory which took place in the late 1800's:

When the soul leaves the body it is as if it were lost in or, if I may say so, surrounded by God. It finds itself in such a bewildering light that in the twinkling of an eye it sees its whole life spread out, and at this sight, it sees what it deserves, and this same light pronounces its sentence. The soul does not see God but is annihilated in His presence. If the soul is guilty as I was and, therefore, deserves to go to Purgatory, it is so crushed by the weight of the faults that still remain to be blotted out, that it hurls itself into Purgatory. (p.30)

Each day thousands of souls come to Purgatory and most of them remain thirty to forty years, some for longer periods, others for shorter. I tell you all this in terms of earthly calculations because here it is quite different. Oh, if people only knew and understood what Purgatory is and what it means to know that we are here through our own fault. I have been here eight years and it seems to me like ten thousand. Oh my God! (p.26)

...the fire of Purgatory is a purification prescribed by God's justice and that [fire] of the earth is very mild compared to that of Purgatory. It is a shadow compared to the furnace of Divine Justice. (p.29)

Yes, I suffer very much, but my greatest torment is not seeing God. It is a continuous martyrdom. It makes me suffer more than does the fire of Purgatory. (p.3)

While you are on earth, it is impossible to understand what God demands of a soul expiating its sins in Purgatory. You are under the impression that many prayers, well said, will place a soul almost at once in possession of eternal happiness. It is nothing of the kind. Who can fathom the judgments of God? Who can understand how pure a soul must be before He admits it to share His eternal happiness? Alas, if people only knew, if they would only consider it while still on earth, what different lives they would lead!

Seriously reflect how many venial sins one who is careless about her eternal salvation commits in one day. How many minutes does she offer up to God? Does she think of Him seriously at all? Well, there are 365 days in one year, and if there are many such years, that person dies charged with a multitude of venial sins which have not been blotted out because she has not even thought of them.

When such a soul appears before God to be judged there is scarcely a spark of love left in that soul when she comes to render an account of her life to Him who demands it back from her. Such all but sterile lives have to be begun all over again, when they reach this place of expiation. Lives lived without love for God will have to be atoned for here in Purgatory with intense sufferings. Whilst on earth, they did not profit by the mercy of God, but lived merely for the sake of the body. Now to regain their first splendor, they have to make satisfaction to the last farthing. That is what happens to indifferent souls. For souls of greater guilt, it is far worse.

Try to love God now so much that you will not have to come here in order to learn how to love Him through sufferings which are without merit. The sufferings and trials on earth are meritorious, therefore, do not lose one of them — but above all, love. Love wipes out many faults and makes one avoid them so as not to give pain to the One we love. That is why a soul that really loves Jesus is constantly on its guard to avoid everything that would grieve His Divine Heart. There are many souls in Purgatory depending on you to deliver them from this place of suffering. Pray with all your heart for them.

To be a friend of Jesus on earth entails suffering of body and soul. The more He loves a soul, the more He shares with it the sorrow He endured for us. Happy is the soul thus privileged. What an opportunity for merit! That is the short cut to Heaven. So do not shun suffering, rather welcome it, since it unites you more intimately with Him, whom you truly love. Have I not told you before that love makes everything sweet? Sorrows appear bitter because you do not love enough. The infallible means of arriving quickly at close union with Jesus is love, but love united to suffering. You have had up to this time many crosses and yet you do not love them as Jesus wants you to. (p.54-55)

As for plenary indulgences, I may as well tell you that few, very few people gain them entirely. There has to be such a wonderful disposition of heart and will that it is rare, much rarer than you think it is, to have the entire remission of one's faults. (p.43)

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let the perpetual Light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.

4. The Wonderful Reality of Heaven

“In my Father's House there are many mansions. ...I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself; that where I AM, you also may be” (Jn 14:1-3).

Unlike Hell and Purgatory, few (with the exception of atheists) have trouble believing in that place of eternal bliss called Heaven. Perhaps this

is because it is such a pleasant thought, and perhaps because we somehow sense this reality in the depths of our hearts. Even so, neither Scripture, nor private revelation give us much clue as to what this happy place will really be like. St. Faustina gives us the reason for this:

... a vivid presence of God suddenly swept over me, and I was caught up in spirit before the majesty of God. ... The glory of God is so great that I dare not try to describe it, because I would not be able to do so, and souls might think that what I have written is all there is. Saint Paul, I understand now why you did not want to describe heaven, but only said that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him....⁷

Still, Blessed Dina Bélanger of Canada gives us this insight:

How far we are from having any idea of the delights enjoyed by the blessed in Heaven! Unless we are profoundly enlightened, we remain ignorant of the true nature of eternal bliss. We will never be able to grasp the immensity of infinite goodness towards every human soul. The longest life on earth lasts in reality but one moment. How foolish we are unless we devote each instant of our life on earth to the greater glory of the Sovereign Master! What a multitude of surprises will be ours at that supreme moment when the veil of truth will be torn apart! What a Tabernacle of delight is the Heart of the Trinity!

In Paradise, the measure of their knowledge of God is the measure of the happiness of the elect. They are totally happy. But one single degree, I venture to say the smallest degree, of knowledge of the Eternal is worth infinitely more than all the inconceivable treasures of created worlds, because it means penetrating one of the infinite secrets of Infinity Itself... All the suffering, the physical and moral torture that can bear down on a human being throughout millions of years, could never be worth one single degree of this knowledge. Quite simply, God in his goodness has to bestow this free gift on us. And how can we obtain it? By the least act of submission of our will to the will of our Father in Heaven, the smallest act done out of love for Him, the least act of obedience, a good desire, an act of self-denial, even a joy accepted in God out of love. The Blessed Trinity is the only Treasure worthy of the name: It offers us incredible riches... Alas! How few accept them by surrendering themselves perfectly to his holy action, by abandoning themselves in faith, trust and love without ever taking anything back!⁸

The thought of Heaven can support us in our sufferings:

For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And, if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs of

Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:17-18)

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ!

† ... † ... †

Part II

I am a Practicing Catholic. Am I Pleasing to God...

5. In My Prayer Life?

Is prayer an essential part of your daily life? Every Catholic who hopes to be saved must pray daily. For, it is impossible to overcome temptations and remain in the state of *Sanctifying Grace* (especially in today's corrupt world) without the assistance of God. We must continually ask for this assistance. St. Alphonsus Liguori taught:

He who prays is certain to be saved; while he who prays not is certain to be damned. All the saints were saved, and came to be saints by praying; all the accursed souls in hell were lost through neglect of prayer; if they had prayed, it is certain that they would not have been lost. And this will be one of the greatest occasions of their anguish in hell, the thought that they might have saved themselves so easily; that they had only to beg God to help them, but that now the time is past when this could avail them⁹

Every Catholic's day should begin with the Morning Offering — the prayer in which we tell Our Lord that all that we do throughout the day we intend to do for Him. If you strive to live this prayer throughout the day, your entire day will become a prayer, an offering to God. The practice of making frequent ejaculatory prayers throughout the day is helpful for keeping the attitude of the Morning Offering throughout the day.

The Morning Offering

O Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, (Here kiss your Brown Scapular) and in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass being offered throughout the world I offer You all my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in reparation for the offences committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for my sins and the sins of the whole world. Amen.

Some time each day should be set aside for conversing with God alone in some quiet place. For some, because of a very busy schedule, this may necessarily be only a short time. It may last only 10-15 minutes, but every Catholic needs this time each day. It may be helpful to begin with a reading from the Holy Bible, The Imitation of Christ or another good devotional book. A little spiritual reading is essential each day, and this can also be the time for it.

If possible, assist devoutly at Holy Mass **every day**. St. Jean Vianney taught that if we knew the value of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we would die of joy!

Among devotions, the one to be most recommended is the Holy Rosary. For as Pope Pius IX stated: *"Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary."* Our Lady has many times asked that we pray it **every day**. How many blessings this brings! Pope Pius XII exclaimed: *"There is no surer means of calling down God's blessings upon the family...than the daily recitation of the Rosary."* The best little book for learning about the wonders and power of the Rosary, as well as how to pray it properly and efficaciously, is The Secret of the Rosary, by St. Louis De Montfort (Available from *Tan Books and Publishers*, Rockford, IL — Ph: 1-800-437-5876).

Another devotion most pleasing to Our Lord is the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Our Lord promised through St. Maria Faustina: *"Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death. ...I desire to grant unimaginable graces to those souls who trust in My Mercy. ...through the Chaplet you will obtain everything, if what you ask for is compatible with My Will."*¹⁰

If a Catholic's day should begin with the Morning Offering, his day should end with an Examination of Conscience and an Act of Contrition. Before going to sleep, kneel down and ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of any wrong you have done during the day. With sorrow for the faults you have committed, make a good Act of Contrition. By thus making amends with God each night you will always sleep in his peace. (See also Section 8 on the Sacrament of Penance).

The Act of Contrition

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 I fear the pains of Hell, but most of all because they offend Thee my God Who art all-good and deserving

of all my love. Henceforth, with the help of Thy grace, I promise to do penance, to amend my life, to avoid sin and the near occasions of sin. Amen.

You will do well if you also take a little time to thank Him for all the blessings of the day. Our Lord who cares for us at every moment suffers greatly from our lack of gratitude. How *few* give Him due thanks (See Lk. 17:12-19)!

6. In the House of God?

Every Catholic church is a sacred place. Each church is the very House of God because Jesus Christ is *really present* there in the Tabernacle. Today it appears many Catholics have forgotten this truth. What about you?...

Reverential Silence

What is your attitude, dear soul, as you enter the church? Today we often observe people sitting around chatting while they wait for Mass, just as though they were in a coffee shop waiting for their order. Is this correct? Let us listen to what Blessed Jacinta Marto of Fatima, who saw Our Lady, has to say about this matter. The following episode happened shortly before her death while she was staying in a Catholic orphanage run by religious sisters:

*Jacinta spent every possible moment in the chapel kneeling, or when she could no longer kneel, she sat in the choir, her eyes riveted on the tabernacle. But in her ardent love for Jesus, she could not overlook the little discourtesies of visitors. "She saw some people who did not show proper reverence in the chapel," the Superior mentioned, "and she said to me, 'My dear Mother, don't allow that. They must act before the Blessed Sacrament as it is proper. Everyone must be quiet in church; they must not speak. If these poor people knew what is waiting for them!' I went downstairs to speak to the people who were misbehaving in the chapel, but I did not always have success. When I returned she said, 'What happened?' I told her they would not listen. 'Patience', she replied, her face showing her sorrow over the irreverences of the people, 'Our Lady is pleased with you. Will you tell the Cardinal? Yes? Our Lady does not want us to talk in Church.'"*¹¹

Those are very strong words for a ten-year-old girl; yet they are to be expected since Our Lady Herself had taught her the grave necessity of proper reverence for Our Eucharistic Lord. And *An Unpublished Manuscript on Purgatory* (mentioned above) confirms this testimony:

...those faults which attack Jesus directly, Jesus present in the Tabernacle, are punished with terrible severity in Purgatory. (p.37)

Attention Solely on Our Lord

To make your visit to Our Eucharistic Lord pleasing to Him, your attention must be centered completely on Him alone. St. Peter Julian Eymard, the 19th century “Apostle of the Eucharist,” instructs:

Watch a saint enter a church. He goes without concerning himself with those who are already there. He concentrates on Our Lord and forgets everything else. In the presence of the Pope we hardly give a thought to cardinals or bishops. And in heaven the saints do not idle away their time honoring one another; to God alone they give all honor and glory. Let us imitate them; Our Lord is the only one in church.

*Remain quiet for a moment after you have come into church; silence is the greatest mark of respect, and the first disposition for prayer is respect. Most of our dryness and lack of devotion in prayer is due to our lack of respect for our Lord on entering the church; to our disrespectful posture.*¹²

Examples of the Saints

The examples of the Saints can be beneficial. These three are given us by Fr. Stefano Manelli — once an altar boy for St. Padre Pio — in his book *Jesus Our Eucharistic Love*:

One day, after he [Bl. Contardo Ferrini] entered a church to visit Our Lord, he became so absorbed in adoration, with eyes fixed on the tabernacle, that he took no notice when someone robbed him of the mantle spread over his shoulders. “Not a bolt of lightning could distract her”, it was said of St. Mary Magdalene Postel, because she appeared so recollected and devout when adoring the Blessed Sacrament. On the other hand, once St. Catherine of Sienna happened to raise her eyes toward a person passing by. Because of this distraction of an instant the Saint was so afflicted that she wept for some time exclaiming, “I am a sinner! I am a sinner!”¹³

Proper Posture

Today, many think bodily posture is unimportant and thus they assume the most casual and relaxed posture in prayer. St. Peter Julian Eymard teaches otherwise:

You owe Our Lord exterior respect, which is the prayer of the body. Nothing helps so much the prayer of the soul.... He [Jesus Christ] gave us the example of exterior worship by praying on his knees; tradition tells us He prayed with arms outstretched in the form of a cross and lifted up to heaven. The Apostles have handed down to us this manner of praying; the priest uses it during the Holy Sacrifice....

*Our piety is agonizing because we lack this external respect. I know that we should not tremble with fear before God, nor be afraid to come into his presence; but, on the other hand, neither should we seem to be despising him.*¹⁴

This same Saint goes on to say:

*An austere posture helps us to pray better; but we refuse this help in order to satisfy our sensuality. We imagine we are tired; how often our imagination deceives us! ... And even supposing that we are really tired, why are we so afraid of suffering, which gives wings to prayer? We should at least have even then, a becoming and grave posture. Let the lay people sit down if they are tired, but in a becoming manner; they should not slouch in their seats. Let them not take any position that would tend to weaken the soul's energy and render it unfit for prayer. We religious, however, should remain on our knees; that is the correct position for an adorer.*¹⁵

In our own times, Pope Benedict XVI — while still the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith — made it clear:

*It may well be that kneeling is alien to modern culture — insofar as it is a culture, for this culture has turned away from the faith and no longer knows the One before whom kneeling is the right, indeed the intrinsically necessary gesture. The man who learns to believe learns also to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling would be sick at the core. Where it has been lost, kneeling must be rediscovered, so that, in our prayer, we remain in fellowship with the apostles and martyrs, in fellowship with the whole cosmos, indeed in union with Jesus Christ Himself.*¹⁶

Jesus' Eucharistic Heart Suffers and wants to be Consoled

Blessed Dina Bélanger of Québec (d. 1929) understood well Our Lord's plight in the Holy Eucharist because of the offenses of ungrateful men. She states in her autobiography:

Jesus is seeking souls to console Him. His Eucharistic Heart is suffering. Oh! How it is suffering...! He desires souls that are totally abandoned to his Love; sensitive souls that not only refuse Him nothing, but seize eagerly upon every opportunity to give Him pleasure, who anticipate his desires and surround Him with attentions, small in themselves yet very great because of the love that prompts them; souls that offer Him all those trifles that his Goodness scatters through each moment of an entire day, those thousands of trivia that, fragrant with pure love, are like a brilliant bouquet of roses.

*Jesus is suffering... How few souls understand the complaint of his Heart in the tabernacle...! Some hear them; very few, alas, understand them!"*¹⁷

How much disrespect and irreverence is shown to Our Lord in our times in his churches. The importance of reverential silence, of keeping one's attention solely on Our Eucharistic Lord and of exterior, bodily respect has been almost completely forgotten. Be aware that Our Lord, always meek and humble, became severe with the moneychangers in the Temple. Why? They were desecrating the House of God. Scripture says: *"The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up."* (Jn. 2:17) And again: *"...if any man violate the Temple of God, him God shall destroy."* (1 Cor. 3:17)

Always take great care then to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament often, and to do so with the greatest respect. His Eucharistic Heart is burning with desire to pour out graces lavishly on those who do. St. Alphonsus Liguori promises: *"You may be sure that of all the moments of your life, the time you spend before the Divine Sacrament will be that which will give you more strength during life and more consolation at the hour of your death and during eternity."*¹⁸

7. When Receiving Holy Communion?

Many are aware that it was Pope St. Pius X who encouraged frequent and even daily Holy Communion. Few, it seems, are aware that along with this he also stated that *"assiduous preparation should precede and suitable thanksgiving should follow Holy Communion."*¹⁹

The Minutes Following Holy Communion

The following excerpts from Fr. Manelli's book on the Holy Eucharist (mentioned earlier) should draw your attention to the importance of taking great care to make *good* Communions:

*"The minutes that follow Communion", St. Mary Magdalene dé Pazzi said, "are the most precious we have in our lives. They are minutes best suited on our part for treating with God, and on his part for communicating His Love to us."*²⁰

And Fr. Manelli cautions:

"How insensitive... for someone to receive Communion and leave the Church at once as soon as Mass is over, or as soon as he has received our Lord! We may remember the example of St. Philip Neri, who had two altar boys with lighted candles go to accompany a man who had left the church

right after his Communion. What a beautiful lesson! For the sake of good manners, if for no other reason, when a person receives a guest he pauses to give his attention to him and takes interest in him. If this guest is Jesus then we will only have reason to be sorry that his bodily presence within us scarcely lasts fifteen minutes or a little more....

*"...oh how we should watch ourselves here! For if it is true that of every Communion Jesus 'gives us a hundredfold for the hospitality we show Him', as St. Teresa of Jesus declares, then it is also true we must answer a hundredfold for neglecting this hospitality."*²¹

All these words should fill you with a holy fear, moving you to follow Fr. Manelli's advice and: *"...resolve to do everything possible so that thanksgiving after Holy Communion lasts at least 15 minutes and nothing takes precedence over it. These minutes in which Jesus is physically present in our souls and within our bodies are heavenly minutes in no wise to be wasted."*²² Then again, endeavor to move beyond fear. Rather, motivated by your love for Jesus and by your desire to please Him, you will make this resolution and always give your Jesus these 15 minutes — and perhaps more. For as St. Alphonsus Liguori has said: *"Alas! A quarter of an hour is too little."*²³ Certainly there can be times when real necessity may keep you from fully observing these 15 minutes, but be careful. St. Pio Pietralcina, on hearing a penitent confess omitting his thanksgiving because of *"some ministry,"* sternly remarked: *"Let us see to it that our being unable is not just being unwilling. I always have to make my thanksgiving; otherwise I pay dearly."*²⁴

How To Make Your Thanksgiving

You have seen the importance of making a lengthy thanksgiving after receiving Jesus Holy Communion, but what should transpire between Jesus and the soul in these treasured moments, and how should this time be spent? Fr. Manelli tells us:

The time of thanksgiving after Holy Communion is the most ideal time for an intimate exchange of love with Jesus. Let it be a love of total self-giving, thus returning Jesus' love so whole-heartedly that there is no longer two of us but one, so to speak, in soul and body. Let it be a love that vivifies and unites — He in me and I in Him, so that we may be consumed in the unity and uniqueness of His love.

*...In truth, in Eucharistic Communion rightly received, the soul realizes, in a heavenly virginal union, a nuptial love for the Spouse, Jesus...*²⁵

The Saints all agree that thanksgiving after Holy Communion should begin with silent adoration. St. Louis de Montfort suggests:

*After Communion while you are interiorly recollected, introduce Jesus into the Heart of Mary. There give Him to his Mother. She will receive Him lovingly, will adore Him profoundly and will render to Him in spirit and in truth many honors which we cannot render Him because of our deep ignorance. ... Keep yourself profoundly humbled in your heart, in the presence of Jesus in Mary.*²⁶

And St. Peter Julian Eymard suggests:

Having received Jesus and enthroned Him in your heart, remain quiet for a moment, not praying in words, but resting in silent adoration; like Zacheus, like Magdalen, prostrate yourself in spirit with the most holy Virgin at the feet of Jesus; contemplate Him, filled with wonder at the sight of His Love.

Proclaim Him King of your heart, Spouse of your soul, and hearken to his voice. ... Say to Him: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Lay your heart at the feet of the heavenly King. ... Offer your will... consecrate all your senses to His divine service.

Bind your intelligence to his throne that it may nevermore go astray; or rather, lay it beneath His feet that He may press forth therefrom all pride and vanity.

Do not disturb your soul so long as it is recollected, at peace in the presence of the Lord; in this gentle slumber on the Heart of Jesus, it receives grace which nourishes it, unites it most sweetly to its Beloved, and profits it more than any other spiritual exercise.

*When this moment is passed, begin your thanksgiving. ...*²⁷

Remain in intimate union with Jesus for at least 15 minutes. Use formulated prayers, prayers from your heart, or remain in silence with your Divine Guest. Then, before leaving, recite the *Magnificat* in union with Mary. Tradition tells us that She repeated this prayer each time She received Our Lord.

Preparation Before Holy Communion

Besides making a lengthy and devout thanksgiving, proper preparation is necessary to insure that your soul has the best dispositions

at the moment of reception. St. Peter Julian Eymard teaches us that the most important disposition for making a good Communion (after that of being in a state of Sanctifying Grace) is *desire*. Listen to his words:

The necessary and essential condition for Communion is the state of grace. Virtue and piety are advisable, but good will and an ardent desire may take their place. Unfortunately, people often go to Communion half-heartedly and with a very faint idea of what they are receiving. Therefore, that we may avoid this fault, let us consider, among the conditions suitable for Communion the one that is first and most important in securing to us the fruit of the Holy Eucharist; that is, desire....

This hunger for Communion God Himself must place in our hearts, else we should never wish to receive Him. ...

Man lives by desire, seeking nothing, undertaking nothing of moment but what he has long desired. Well, a divine desire urges us to receive Communion, a desire so strong that it gives us courage to approach the Judge of heaven and earth without dying of fear. This hunger for God excuses our temerity. Surely, the poor unfortunate who takes a loaf of bread in order not to starve to death is not a thief; his need excuses him....

The true reason then, for receiving Communion is the hunger one feels for it. ... If you are not growing spiritually, if you are not becoming stronger, you are not eating enough, or else you are eating without appetite. Arouse yourself, recognize your need at any rate, even if you cannot feel the hunger of love.²⁸

St. Francis de Sales gives this advice to the laity in making their preparation for Holy Communion:

Begin your preparation for Holy Communion on the evening before by many loving aspirations and transports and retire a little earlier so that you may rise earlier in the morning. If you awake during the night, immediately fill your heart and mouth with words redolent of love by which your soul will be perfumed to receive its Spouse. Since He is awake even while you sleep, He is prepared to bring you countless graces and favors if on your part you are ready to receive them. In the morning get up with great joy because of the Happiness you hope for.²⁹

Once in Church, before Holy Mass begins, continue your preparation with fervent Acts of Contrition, Humility, Faith, Hope, Love and Desire.

Holy Communion in Union with Mary

A Meditation on the Hail Mary ³⁰

Preparation:

O Holy Virgin, I am about to receive your Jesus. I wish my heart to be like yours when You became the Mother of the Savior at the moment of the Annunciation of the Angel.

Hail Mary: I greet You, O good Mother. Allow me to unite myself to You to adore Jesus. Lend me your affections, or better still, adore Him for me as You adored Him at the moment of his Incarnation in your Virginal Womb. Hail, O true Body of Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary! I believe, and adore You.

Full of Grace: You, O Mary, were worthy to receive the All-Holy God, for You were full of grace from the first moment of your life. But I am poor and sinful. My evil ways make me unfit to go to Communion. O my Mother, cover me with your merits and lead me to Jesus.

The Lord is with Thee: The Lord is with You, O most holy Virgin. By your ardent longing You drew Him down from Heaven into your Heart. Instill also in my heart an ardent longing and an insatiable hunger for Jesus, so that I can truly say to Him, "Come, O my Jesus, I long for You with the Heart of Mary, your Mother and mine."

Blessed art Thou amongst women: Blessed are You, O Mary, who have never known the remorse that comes from committing sin; for You are free of every kind of sin and imperfection. But I know I have sinned, and I am not sure that I have been sufficiently sorry. Make me understand the evil of my sins and the goodness of God whom I have offended. I weep for my sins. Present me thus contrite to your Jesus.

And blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb: Ah, good Mother! What a great gift You have given us in giving us our Savior, Jesus! And behold, He wants to come to me to make me an especially beloved child of your Heart. I go with confidence to receive Him, and I say to Him: "My Jesus, I abandon myself to You. Come to give me the strength to serve You faithfully and the hope of enjoying You forever with your Mother in Heaven.

Jesus: Grant, O Mother, that I experience those sentiments that You experienced as You lived in Jesus' company, as You called Him by name. I am now about to receive Him. Allow me to be able to say to Him: "Come, O my Jesus. You will find in me the same welcome of love and adoration that You had from your Mother on earth. I hope that through her intercession, You will welcome me into Heaven."

Thanksgiving

Holy Mary, Mother of God: O my Mother, how happy I am to be united with your Jesus! But how do I deserve to have my Lord come to me? O Mary, You who are Holy and Immaculate, offer Him worthy thanks for me.

You who were the first to hear the heartbeats of Jesus whom I now welcome within me, You who loved Him more than all the Saints together, and who lived for Him alone when You were on earth, grant that I may now share your sentiments of adoration and your love.

And You, O Jesus, accept the love of your Mother as though it were my own and do not deny me a tender glance while I also say to You with all my heart, "I love You."

Pray for us sinners: Pray for me, O Mary. At this time unite your prayers to mine. And now that Jesus has come into my heart, willing to grant me all graces, I wish to ask Him above all that I never separate myself from Him by sin. And You, O Mary, preserve me from evil and be my refuge in temptation.

Now: And so, O my dear Mother, I beg for all the graces that are profitable to my soul. Obtain for me this favor: that I be clothed with the virtues of goodness and meekness and that my life be one of spotless purity.

And at the hour of our death: I pray beginning from this very moment, O Jesus, that I may receive You worthily at the time of my death and that my death may be a holy one. I accept it, when and as You shall send it to me — I welcome it in union with your Sacrifice fulfilled on the Cross. I accept it in order to submit myself to the Divine Will, for the glory of God, for my salvation, and for the salvation of souls.

O Sorrowful Virgin, assist me as You assisted Jesus in his last agony.

Amen: "So be it." O Jesus, here is the word that I want to repeat at every instant, both during my youth and throughout my life. May your will be done always. All that You provide is the best thing for me, and from now on I accept it and give You thanks. Amen.

Thoughts on Communion in the Hand

What, dear reader, should a Catholic striving to please Our Lord, think of the widespread practice of receiving Holy Communion in the hand? Let us begin by reporting that when Fr. George Rutler asked Mother Teresa, *"What to you think is the worst problem in the world today?"* she quickly replied: *"Wherever I go in the whole world, the thing that makes me the saddest is watching people receive Communion-in-the-hand."*³¹ Here we also note that certain words and actions of Pope John Paul II have indicated his displeasure with the practice, and that Pope Benedict XVI during his pontificate discontinued this practice in Rome.

From where did this practice in the Church originate? In an act of disobedience to existing Church law (which allowed Holy Communion to be received only on the tongue), it was introduced by certain European prelates immediately after Vatican II. In 1969, under Pope Paul VI, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Memoriale Domini*. The purpose of this document was to address this spreading disobedience to Church law. This document states:

...in view of the gravity of the matter and the force of the arguments put forward, the Holy Father has decided not to change the existing way of administering Holy Communion to the faithful [i.e. only on the tongue]. The Apostolic See therefore emphatically urges bishops, priests and laity to obey carefully the law which is still valid and which has again been confirmed.

The same document also states that Communion on the tongue “*must be retained, taking the present situation of the Church in the entire world into account, not merely because it has many centuries of tradition behind it, but especially because it expresses the faithful's reverence for the Eucharist.*”

Be aware, we are told that receiving on the tongue is an expression of reverence.

If Communion-in-the-hand was to be allowed at all, according to this document, it would be in those areas where (disobediently) the practice “*has already been developed.*” In those areas, the particular episcopal conference could petition the Holy See to ratify the practice. As of 1969, when *Memoriale Domini* was issued, Communion-in-the-hand had not been established in the United States. Nevertheless, certain members of the U.S. Episcopacy in the 1970's pushed for it and in the end received an Indult from the Vatican. That this Indult was granted does not automatically make it a noble practice. *Memoriale Domini* warned that the practice of receiving Communion on the tongue was “*based on a most ancient and venerable tradition*” and that a change in this practice: “*carries certain dangers with it...: the danger of loss of reverence for the august Sacrament of the altar, of profanation, of adulterating the true doctrine.*” We can see by the present state of Eucharistic faith and devotion in the Church that this warning was far from being unfounded. Would not the situation be much better today if the Church had continued to stick rigidly with the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas?

*...out of reverence towards this Sacrament, nothing touches it but what is consecrated, hence the corporal and the chalice are consecrated, and likewise the priest's hands, for touching this Sacrament. Hence it is not lawful for anyone to touch it, except from necessity, for instance if it were to fall upon the ground, or else in some other case of urgency.*³²

At the 1997 Call to Holiness Conference, the well-known Jesuit, Fr. John Hardon (RIP), explained to those present: *“Behind Communion-in-the-hand — I wish to repeat and make as plain as I can — is a weakening, a conscious, deliberate weakening of faith in the Real Presence.”* Therefore, he advised: *“Whatever you can do to stop Communion-in-the-hand will be blessed by God.”*

The Novus Ordo (New Mass)

Communion-in-the-hand is only one of numerous irreverences, sacrileges and offenses commonly committed against Our Eucharistic Lord at the *Novus Ordo* Mass. Because of these abuses I can only advise all Catholics to avoid such Masses and thus avoid the guilt of becoming silent accomplices to them. But that is not all. It must also be added that the *Novus Ordo* does not clearly profess Catholic Doctrine as it should and is therefore a danger to the Faith. As the former head of the Holy Office, Cardinal Ottaviani, stated in his famous letter of alarm to Pope Paul VI concerning the New Mass: *“...the Novus Ordo Missæ...represents, as a whole and in detail, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent, which, by fixing definitively the ‘canons’ of the rite, erected an insurmountable barrier against any heresy which might attack the integrity of the Mystery.”* Pope Benedict XVI has also shown clear displeasure with the *Novus Ordo*. In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (written when he was the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith), he called the New Mass a *“fabricated liturgy...a banal on-the-spot product,”* which has divorced itself from the proper *“organic, living process of growth and development”* that takes place *“over centuries.”*³³

How many Catholics do we see today who attend the New Mass weekly (even daily) and yet — because the *“insurmountable barrier”* has been removed allowing for the present *“attack on the integrity of the Mystery”* — have lost their belief in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. For the same reason, many have also lost their understanding of the Divine Sacrifice that takes place at Mass! Thus to avoid the guilt of silently participating in sacrilege and to safeguard our Catholic Faith, shouldn’t we Catholics avoid this New Mass and rather attend only the Traditional Latin (Tridentine) Mass or the un-tampered-with Liturgies of the Catholic Eastern Rites?

Certainly much more needs to be said on this subject, but space here does not allow for it. To learn more, see my booklet, *The Novus Ordo Question*, available for download at sicutincaelo.org. You may find it a real eye-opener!

8. In Receiving the Sacrament of Penance?

How easy it is, dear soul, to make going to Confession a routine. Be aware that simply reporting your sins to the priest is not enough to make a worthy Confession. There are five steps for making a worthy Confession:

- (1) Examination of Conscience
- (2) Contrition (sorrow) for sin
- (3) Firm Purpose of Amendment
- (4) Confession of Sins
- (5) Intention of doing the Penance.

All five steps are necessary, and St. Francis de Sales warns:

However small the sins you confess may be, always have sincere sorrow for them together with a firm resolution to correct them in the future. Many who confess their venial sins out of custom and concern for order, but without thought for amendment remain burdened with them for their whole life and thus lose many spiritual benefits and advantages. If you confess that you have told a lie, even though a harmless one, or have spoken some improper word, or played cards too much, be sorry and make a firm resolution to amend. It is an abuse to confess any kind of sin, whether mortal or venial, without a will to be rid of it since Confession was instituted for no other purpose.³⁴

(1) Examination of Conscience: All Catholics should make an examination of conscience at least once daily (See section 5). Ordinarily this should take place at the end of the day, just before retiring. By jotting down your sins each day during these examens, you should have, when it comes time to confess, a thorough report of all your failings since your previous Confession.

(2) Contrition (sorrow) for sin: Though you must have true sorrow for your sins to make a worthy Confession, this does not mean you must shed tears or feel your heart broken. True sorrow consists in simply regretting your offenses with a supernatural motive. This supernatural motive can be based on fear (fearing the punishments of God: the loss of Heaven or the pains of hell and purgatory), or based on love (regretting having offended God who is all-good and deserving of all your love). Sorrow which is motivated by fear is *sufficient* for the forgiveness of your sins, but is *imperfect*. Sorrow based on love is *perfect*. Naturally, it is better to strive for sorrow that is perfect. To evoke this true and perfect sorrow in your heart, before entering the confessional, take ample time to consider

the terrible effects of your sins, and of your lack of correspondence to God's graces — purchased for you by the Precious Blood of your Savior Jesus.

— Considerations to Evoke Contrition

Sometimes a soul may be tempted to look at the crucifix and think that because there, collectively, Jesus suffered for all the sins of the world, it has little effect on Him whether I sin more or less. This is far from the truth! We know that in the Garden of Gethsemane all the sins of the world (yours included) came before Jesus and, in a mysterious manner, He suffered to make atonement for each one. For this reason, Pope Pius XI exclaimed in his encyclical on Reparation to the Sacred Heart: *“Every sin must be said to renew in a certain way the Passion of Our Lord, ‘crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making Him a mockery’”* (Heb. 6:6).

It is also good to consider that it is not only Jesus who suffers for our sins. Following Jesus in everything, Our Blessed Mother Mary, suffered in like manner. Aware of all your sins, She suffered for each of them — one by one. Jesus revealed to Venerable Maria Conception Cabrera de Armida: *“As Co-Redemptrix, Mary heard in her soul so wholly pure the echo of all My agonies, humiliations, outrages and tortures, felt the weight of the sins of the world which make My Heart bleed, and the moving sorrow of the abandonment of heaven which obtains graces.... Thus it is that She suffered for her children, that She gave them the supernatural life of grace, that She obtained heaven for them.”* (Diary, June 22, 1918).³⁵

While it is important to be sorry for your sins, never allow your sins or the effects of your sins to cause you to become discouraged or dejected. This is a trick of the Evil One, and an offense to your Jesus *who is infinite Love and Mercy*. Remember, Jesus knew all the sins you would commit, and how many times you would repeat them long before you were born. It didn't stop Him from creating you, nor from giving you the supreme gift of the Catholic Faith that you might have Eternal Salvation.

(3) Firm Purpose of Amendment: While meditating on the terrible effects caused by your sins and by your lack of correspondence to grace, you should not only experience sorrow for sin, but a desire for amendment. In fact, you couldn't say you were truly sorry unless you meant to change and cease sinning. A firm purpose of amendment means you have sincerely resolved not only to avoid sin, but also to avoid (when it is possible) the near occasions of sin.

(4) Confession of Sins: First of all, every Catholic must be aware that if one is guilty of mortal sins, they all must be confessed in kind and number.* Deliberately withholding even *one* mortal sin not only invalidates the Sacrament, but it also turns the receiving of this Sacrament into a sacrilege. If you unintentionally forget a mortal sin, your Confession is valid, but you should confess this sin at your next Confession. It is not necessary to confess each venial sin, but it is always better to do so in order to be certain of being forgiven for them and to gain from this Sacrament, the grace to overcome them.

The best way to ensure that you will have a thorough inventory of all your offenses when approaching this Sacrament is by jotting down your sins and faults each night after examining your conscience. Before confessing, put this inventory into order. Putting like sins together, see how many times you committed each kind of sin.

Your confession should be *humble, sincere* and *entire*, for these are the three qualities of a good confession. The Baltimore Catechism teaches:

*Our confession is humble when we accuse ourselves of our sins with a conviction of guilt of having offended God. ...Our confession is sincere when we tell our sins honestly and frankly. ...Our confession is entire when we confess at least all mortal sins, telling their kind, the number of times we have committed each sin, and any circumstances changing their nature.*³⁶

If you want to make real spiritual progress, then besides jotting down and confessing your sins themselves, you will also strive, with God's help, to discover the reason or motive for your sins. Hence, St. Francis de Sales instructs:

*...we must state the **fact**, the **motive**, and the **duration** of our sins.*
(Emphasis added)³⁷

(5) Intention of doing the Penance: After confessing your sins, promptly do your penance. Also be very careful to thank God for the tremendous gift you have received in this Sacrament. Remember the ten lepers that Jesus healed in the Gospel (Lk. 17), and be sure to be as that one that returned to give thanks. Psalm 102 (103) is a fitting prayer of thanksgiving:

Bless the Lord, O my soul and let all that is within me
bless his holy Name, etc....

* A sin is mortal if: 1) It is a serious matter; 2) One is mindful that it is seriously wrong; 3) One fully consents to it.

Frequency

Many of the Saints, including St. Ignatius, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis de Sales, St. Frances of Rome, and St. Joseph of Cupertino, went to Confession every day. St. Francis de Sales recommends weekly confession for those among the laity who desire to live a devout life.³⁸ Certainly no Catholic who receives Holy Communion every Sunday should confess with any less frequency than once a month. What an insult to our Lord to offer Him a soul sullied by the countless sins and faults that accumulate in a month's time when all could easily be purified by a worthy Confession. If a dignified guest were coming to your home (i.e. the President, a Cardinal), would you leave your house in a shambles, or rather would you not do your utmost to have it orderly, clean and spotless? All the more reason to purify your soul of even the smallest sins before the arrival of this Guest of infinite dignity, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, even if you have not been able to confess with this minimally desired frequency, as long as you are not in mortal sin and you have the proper dispositions, do not allow venial sins to keep you from receiving.

Also keep in mind the many benefits of confessing venial sins and faults. St. Francis de Sales says: *"In Confession you not only receive absolution from the venial sins you confess, but also great strength to avoid them in the future, light to see them clearly, and abundant graces to repair whatever damage you have incurred."*³⁹

9. In the Manner that I Dress?

This is a very difficult subject to discuss. During the twentieth century, fashions drifted so far from what is proper according to Christian teaching, that to speak the truth on this subject will cause some to be left stunned and in disbelief. But because the truth must be preached *"in season"* and *"out of season"* (2Tim. 4:2) there is no choice but to present the truth. Those who are lovers of truth will undoubtedly see the truth in what is presented and want to put it into practice.

Perhaps for some, this section will be the litmus test to determine whether or not they are truly willing to take up the Cross and follow Christ rather than compromise with the maxims of this world.

It is widely known that Pope Pius XII often said: *"The greatest sin of our modern generation is that it has lost all sense of sin."*⁴⁰ It is less known that more specifically he once stated: *"Many women...give in to the tyranny*

of fashion, be it even immodest, in such a way as to appear not even to suspect that it is unbecoming. They have lost the very concept of danger: they have lost the instinct of modesty."⁴¹ These words spoken over 50 years ago ring more true today than ever (and not only for women). For in today's post-Christian society where indecent and improper dress have become the norm, even among good-willed and devout Catholics there is much ignorance as to what is meant by proper Christian modesty. Although there is not space here to fully cover the topic, this section is included to give the reader a good indication of the mind of the Church, and therefore, the mind of Christ, on what constitutes proper Christian modesty and decency in dress. In these times when indecency has become the norm, Catholics must be vigilant in their effort to maintain modesty in dress.

Two Aspects

There are two aspects to Christian modesty. The first is to avoid being an occasion of sin. The second, more positively speaking, is to be instilled with the spirit of modesty inspired by a deep love for the virtue of chastity, and also by the proper understanding that our clothing is meant to enhance the dignity of the human body and to be a symbol of our state in life. Both aspects, while in no way excluding men, are much more important for women. Because of the natural differences in the genders, women are both far more prone to be occasions of sin, and to be treated with less dignity or respect than men. Proper dress does much to overcome this, and this is why St. Paul wrote in the New Testament that women should appear "*in decent apparel; adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety.*" (1 Tim. 2:9).

The First Aspect: Avoiding Occasions of Sin

With regards to the first aspect — avoiding being an occasion of sin — the late Archbishop Albert G. Meyer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has these words to say, taken from his Pastoral Letter to the clergy, Religious and Faithful Laity (May 1, 1956):

In the desire to fulfill the charge given to us as your pastor, whose duty it is to protect his flock against the enemy, and as an appointed watchman of God, who must speak out in clear and explicit warnings, lest the sins of those who err be charged to his account (Ezech. 33:8-9), we have decided to address this letter to you. In this letter, it is our thought to consider the general subject of Decency...

*We are impelled to do this as we recall some of the recent forceful statements of our Holy Father (Pope Pius XII) ...**

... With regard to clothing, modesty requires especially two things: first, care that one does not make purity difficult for oneself, or for others, by one's own mode of dress; and, second, a prudent but firm and courageous resistance to the styles and customs, no matter how popular or widespread, or adopted by others, which are a danger to purity

... We must emphasize in the strongest possible language that it is Catholic teaching, based on the most clear words of Christ Himself, that impure thoughts and desires freely indulged in are serious sins. To invite such impure thoughts and desires through dress ... [one] cannot help but participate [in] the grave sin of scandal and cooperation.⁴²

Heaven too warned us to offer a “firm and courageous resistance to the styles and customs.” **Our Lady of Fatima** told Blessed Jacinta Marto in 1919:

Certain fashions are to be introduced which will offend Our Lord very much. Those who serve God should not follow these fashions. The Church has no fashions. Our Lord is always the same.⁴³

Dear Catholic ladies, you must clearly understand that, while not all men are tempted in the same way or to the same extent, in general, bare thighs, mid-ribs, shoulders, and backs; low cut, sheer or see-through blouses and shirts; and dresses with long slits are all sources of temptation. Therefore, all these must all be absolutely avoided to avoid serious sin.

Even when the body is adequately covered, be aware that clothes that adhere too closely to the flesh and reveal a woman's form (so common in our time) are just as much a source of temptation. Pants on women are of special concern because by their very nature they conform more to the shape of the body than dresses or skirts. Therefore, it is generally more difficult for a woman to preserve modesty in them, especially when she stoops or bends. Tight-fitting jeans — which unfortunately are most popular today — incite

* In a letter issued on Aug. 15, 1954 by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, Pope Pius XII directed the world's bishops to “take action against the most serious plague of immodest fashions.” He further implored “promote with all your power, everything which has to do with the protection of modesty” and “leave no stone unturned which can remedy the situation.”

impurity in the most blatant manner. They are certainly the source of innumerable mortal sins and have no place on Christian women.

The words of the Angelic Doctor help us to keep the proper perspective: *"The good of our soul is more important than that of our body; and we have to prefer the spiritual welfare of our neighbor to our bodily comforts."*⁴⁴ For precisely this reason, Pope Pius XII concluded that if a certain kind of dress *"becomes a grave and proximate danger for the salvation of the soul...it is your duty to give it up."*⁴⁵

Strong Admonitions from the Saints

Be well aware that the strict necessity of modesty in dress has been the constant teaching of the Church throughout the centuries. As Fr. Stefano M. Manelli, FFI (once an altar boy for St. Padre Pio), stated in his marvelous book, Jesus Our Eucharistic Love: *"A strict insistence on this particular point is a constant in the lives of all the Saints, from the Apostle, St. Paul (telling the woman to wear a veil so that she may not need to have her head appear 'as if she were shorn': [1Cor. 11:5-6]), to St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, etc., down to Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, who would permit no halfway measures, but always insisted on modest dresses clearly below the knees."*⁴⁶ In fact, when coming to confess, if their dresses were low-cut or too short, St. Padre Pio would send the women away, refusing them this Sacrament. As dresses in the 60's became scantier and scantier, he sent larger and larger numbers of women away. It finally came to pass — since he was sending so many away — that his fellow friars posted a sign on the door of the Church which read: *"By Padre Pio's explicit wish, women must enter the confessional wearing skirts at least 8 inches below the knee...."* If those whom he refused asked why he treated them in this manner, he would answer: *"Don't you know what pain it costs me to shut the door on anyone? The Lord has forced me to do so. I do not call anyone, nor do I refuse anyone either. There is someone else who calls and refuses them. I am His useless tool."*⁴⁷ Certainly this action was most appropriate, since it would not have been right to grant them absolution while dressed in an indecent manner.

A Universal Standard

Once one understands the Church's constant teaching on the importance of proper dress, the next question one may ask is: How must I dress to be sure that I am modest according to the Church's teaching? Is everyone left to follow his own judgment in this matter? Fortunately not. In order that there be no doubt as to what constitutes proper Christian dress, in 1930 Pope Pius XI gave the Catholic Church the following universal norm:

*In order that uniformity in understanding prevail...we recall that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers' breadth under the pit of the throat; which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows; and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent materials are improper.*⁴⁸

Using Pope Pius XI's universal standard, the American priest, Fr. Bernard A. Kunkel, developed *"The Marylike Standards For Modesty In Dress."* Fr. Kunkel's idea was to use Mary as the model of modesty and the Pope's standard as a concrete guide, and thus with his *"Marylike Standards,"* women could be sure of pleasing God in their manner of dress. Fr. Kunkel's *"Marylike Standards"* were given ecclesiastical approval in 1944 and from that time to his death in 1969, with the help of these standards, he preached his *"Marylike Modesty Crusade."* This Crusade, twice received the Apostolic blessing from Pope Pius XII who also extended his blessing *"to all who further their laudable movement for modesty in dress and behavior."*⁴⁹ The *"Marylike Standards"* can be found at the end of this section.

The Second Aspect:

The Spirit of Modesty and The Traditional Form of Dress

The second aspect of modesty is more subtle and therefore perhaps not so readily understood. Here we learn that the way we dress communicates many things, and therefore, the Christian must be careful to ensure he is sending the proper messages. Fr. William C. Breda, O.S.A., explains this in an article entitled "Proper Attire Makes Us Human" in the September 10, 1981 issue of *"The Wanderer"*:

*There seems to persist among many people the mistaken belief that we clothe ourselves mainly against the inclemencies of the climate, for protection against the weather and the cold, and that when summer comes, and the warm weather, we can doff our suits and dresses and go about unclad and half-naked. The whole idea is of course superficial... Without proper attire and without distinctive raiment we are simply not even **human**. Chesterton somewhere points to the truth of the old phrase '**clothed and in his right mind**' [Mk. 5:15]; a sound and sane man moves around in his world in decent and proper apparel.*

*Our clothes are first and most of all the symbols of our state of life and of our social dignity. In the manner in which we dress and present ourselves, we express our masculinity and femininity...we manifest our beliefs and convictions, and we also proclaim our designs and intentions, and denote our tastes and tendencies. We are able therefore, or should be, to recognize a man and a woman by the clothes they are wearing.*⁵⁰
(Emphasis in the original).

Why Modest Dresses and Skirts?

From this we see the need for distinction in dress between the sexes. Historically, it can be said that in Judeo-Christian societies, this distinction has always been observed. For even in the days when men wore robes they were distinctly different from those of women. In the Book of Deuteronomy we see that it is God Himself who wills this distinction: *“A woman shall not be clothed with man's apparel: neither shall a man use women's apparel. For he that doeth these things is abominable before God.”* (Deut. 22:5). Since Biblical times, we find that in Christian societies of the West, the traditional form of dress became loose fitting trousers for men and long modest dresses or skirts for women. For the first 1900 years of Christian history women generally wore long dresses extending near or to the ankle. This was true whether a woman was riding an animal (like Our Lady en route to Bethlehem at the dawn of the Christian Era) or working in the fields (like St. Maria Goretti at the dawn of the 20th Century) — activities done more easily in pants or shorts. Why did Christian women dress in this fashion? The answer lies in the fact that dresses are a more dignified form of dress than pants, and thus they both adorn and safeguard a woman's beautiful and delicate femininity. In fact, Chesterton points out that because this style of clothing is more dignified, *“when men wish to be safely impressive, as judges, priests or kings, they do wear skirts, the long, trailing robes of female dignity.”*⁵¹

Yes, even judges, priests, and kings traditionally wear distinguished robes signifying the special dignity of their office. Their manner of dress evokes the respect of others. And while it is fitting for a man to dress in robes (of masculine character), as was the custom in Biblical times, the thinking here is that it is not fitting for a woman to degrade her feminine dignity by wearing pants. As was stated above, because of the natural differences in the genders, women are more prone to be treated with less dignity or respect than men. Thus, Pope Pius XII taught that *“the innate need to enhance beauty and dignity”* is *“more greatly felt by woman.”*⁵² By returning to the habitual use of traditional feminine attire, women will again evoke the respect of their male counterparts and do much to combat the abuse to which they are often subject today. If they dress like dandelions they are sure to be stepped on, but if they dress like roses they will elicit admiration, command the respect of others, and glorify their God-given femininity.

If we understand the female's greater need to enhance her dignity and to safeguard her feminine identity, we can understand why pants were never considered acceptable garb for women throughout the Church's

history. Pope Pius XI's universal standard for women's attire mentions only a dress. No standard was given for pants because they certainly were not considered feminine garb at that time.

Now, however, at the dawn of the third millennium, it is clear that *secular society* in general has approved of pants for women. But is that enough? Not according to Pope Pius XII. In his address to the Latin Union of High Fashion in 1957 he stated that a *"garment must not be evaluated according to the estimation of a decadent or already corrupt society, but according to the aspirations of a society which prizes the dignity and seriousness of its public attire."*⁵³ With the laws of our land (for many years now) permitting abortion and various other types of immoral acts, it is clear that our society is *"decadent"* and *"already corrupt."* And looking at what our society allows our children and teenagers to wear (*i.e.* skintight jeans, miniskirts, halter tops, etc.) it is clear that our society does not *"prize the dignity"* nor the *"seriousness of its public attire."* Therefore, society's approval of pants on women is certainly no guarantee that this mode of dress is worthy of feminine dignity, or much less that it is pleasing to God.

Later in his same address, Pope Pius XII called us to return to traditional dress. He stated that because people are often *"too docile"* or *"too lazy"* to make their own critical judgment, they tend to *"accept the first thing that is offered to them and only later become aware of how mediocre or unbecoming certain fashions are."*⁵⁴ Because of this he warned that *"style"* should not be *"abandoned to caprice."* Rather, individuals *"should liberate themselves with free and enlightened conscience from the imposition of pre-determined tastes, especially tastes debatable on moral grounds."* Therefore, he concluded: ***"...react firmly against currents that are contrary to the best traditions."***⁵⁵

We have seen that traditional form of attire for women is long dresses extending near or to the ankle. We have also seen that pants on women, because they usually tend to conform to the shape of the body, are indeed *"debatable on moral grounds."* Therefore, it seems clear that the Pope is asking women to *"react firmly against"* donning pants (shorts and other novelties of modern attire) which are nowhere to be found in Christian tradition. This same Pope went on to suggest as the best models for women's attire the *"feminine figures in the masterpieces of classical art which have undisputed esthetical value. Here the clothing marked by Christian decency, is a worthy ornament of the person with whose beauty it blends as in a single triumph of dignity."*⁵⁶ Perhaps such clothing that admirably clothes the body in such a dignified manner won't easily be

found today; nevertheless, a lofty example has been given for the Christian woman to pursue.

More still could be said on this subject but space does not permit. Let us end by recalling that all Christians, men, women and children are called to dress with apt dignity. If by our manner of dress “*we express*” not only “*our masculinity and femininity*,” as Fr. Breda explained, but also “*our beliefs and convictions*”, we can understand the reason for this. What is our conviction? What do we believe as Christians? St. Paul makes it clear:

Surely you know that your bodies are the shrines of the Holy Ghost, Who dwells in you. And He is God's gift to you, so that you are no longer your own masters. A great price was paid to ransom you; glorify God by making your bodies the shrines of his presence. (1 Cor. 6:19-20, Knox version)

Here then is the true reason why Christians for nineteen hundred years held to the traditional form of dress and why we should continue to do so today.

The Standards

The Marylike Standards For Modesty In Dress ⁵⁷

In order that uniformity in understanding prevail... we recall that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers breadth under the pit of the throat; which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows; and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent materials are improper. ~ The Cardinal Vicar of Pope Pius XI

1. *Marylike is modest without compromise, “like Mary,” Christ's Mother.*
2. *Marylike dresses have sleeves extending at least to the elbows and skirts reaching below the knees.* [When a woman sits down her knees should still be well covered. Remember Padre Pio's “8 inches below” — editor]

(Note: because of impossible market conditions quarter-length sleeves are temporarily tolerated with Ecclesiastical Approval, until Christian womanhood again turns to Mary as the model of modesty in dress.)

3. *Marylike dresses require full coverage for the bodice, chest, shoulders, and back; except for a cut-out about the neck not exceeding two inches below the neckline in front and in back, and a corresponding two inches on the shoulders.* [The “neckline in front” runs along the top of the collarbone, somewhat above the “pit of the throat.” — editor]
4. *Marylike dresses do not admit as modest coverage transparent fabrics — laces, nets, organdy, nylons, etc. — unless sufficient backing is added. However, their moderate use as trimmings is acceptable.*

5. *Marylike dresses avoid the improper use of flesh-colored fabrics.*
6. *Marylike dresses conceal rather than reveal the figure of the wearer; they do not emphasize, unduly, parts of the body.* [Thus tight fitting clothes are to be avoided. —editor]
7. *Marylike dresses provide full coverage even after jacket, cape or stole are removed.*

— As noted above, if women take special precautions with pants (*i.e.* baggy pants / long tops), it may be possible to satisfy the *first aspect* of modesty. However, it is hoped that the discussion on the *second aspect* has helped them understand the importance of forgoing this mode of dress and of returning to “*the best traditions*,” called for by Pope Pius XII.

Men

Men too must dress with proper Christian dignity. How overly casual they have become. Although the Church has not provided a universal standard for men, still, some guidelines can be found. In May 1946 the Canadian Bishops directed these words on modesty to men: “*Man himself does not escape from the inclination of exhibiting his flesh: some go in public, stripped to the waist, or in very tight pants or in very scanty bathing suits. They thus commit offences against the virtue of modesty. They may also be an occasion of sin (in thought or desire) for our neighbor.*”⁵⁸

Certainly then, men must take care to avoid tight fitting clothes, short shorts, low-buttoned shirts, muscle shirts, and going shirtless. Because of their Christian dignity, for their everyday attire they should gladly adhere to the traditional form of dress for men: Loose fitting slacks and shirts. Long, loose fitting shorts are acceptable for sports, hiking and certain types of work. And finally, it should go without saying that earrings and other marks of effeminacy are to be avoided.

Children

Finally, with regards to youngsters, the Church teaches that even small children should be instructed in the practice of properly covering and adorning the body. In this way, by the time they reach puberty their sense of modesty will have become very acute, and the observance of modesty an ordinary part of their daily lives. In 1930, by mandate of Pope Pius XI, the Sacred Congregation of the Council issued a letter, which in part, decreed the following:

Parents, conscious of their grave obligations toward the education, especially religious and moral, of their offspring, should assiduously inculcate in their souls, by word and example, love for the virtues of modesty and

*purity, and since their family should follow the example of the Holy Family, they must rule in such a manner that all its members, reared within the walls of the home, should find reason and incentive to love and preserve modesty. ...Let parents never permit their daughters to don immodest garb.*⁵⁹

Later, that great champion of Christian modesty, Pope Pius XII, gave these strong admonitions to parents:

*Woe to those fathers and mothers lacking in energy and prudence, who cede to the caprices of their children and surrender that paternal authority written on the brow of man and wife as a reflection of the divine Majesty.*⁶⁰

*...O Christian mothers (and fathers), if only you knew the future of distress and peril, of shame ill-restrained, that you prepare for your sons and daughters in imprudently accustoming them to live hardly clothed and in making them lose the sense of modesty, you would be ashamed of yourselves and of the harm done to the little ones whom Heaven entrusted to your care, to be reared in Christian dignity and culture.*⁶¹

Finally, on December 8, 1995, the Pontifical Council for the Family reminded parents:

*Even if they are socially acceptable, some habits of speech and dress are not morally correct and represent a way of trivializing sexuality, reducing it to a consumer object. Parents should therefore teach their children the value of Christian modesty, moderate dress, and, when it comes to trends, the necessary autonomy.*⁶²

All Times and Places

Catholics must also be aware that just because they are at a picnic or on an outing does not mean they can forego modesty in dress. Although there are, indeed, different types of clothing for various occasions, the *Marylike Modesty Crusade* taught that the same two rules apply everywhere: “Sufficient coverage and proper fit.”⁶³ This certainly makes sense since our fallen human nature always remains just as prone to sin regardless of the activity. Much of today's sportswear does not come close to meeting this Christian standard. Here is seen the reason one Cardinal was moved warn:

*A special danger to morals is represented by public bathing at the beaches, in pools and river banks... Mixed bathing between men and women which nearly always is an approximate occasion of sin and a scandal, must be avoided.*⁶⁴

Let us keep in mind that until the mid 1800's people just didn't swim in public. It seems in the past folks were well aware of the “special danger to morals” this would cause. Therefore, if any swimming is to be done, it

should be within the family in an enclosed area. And carefully selected, skirted swimsuits will be necessary to preserve the modesty and femininity of the women.*

In Church

Since Catholic Churches contain Jesus' Real Presence in the Tabernacle, they are the holiest places on earth; therefore, modesty must be specially observed in them. Modesty should also be specially observed in other sacred places (*i.e.* outdoor shrines, convents, rectories, seminaries, etc.). This is so important that the Marylike Crusade offered a special imprimatured *"Code of Attire for Church and Sacred Places."* This Code taught women that while they should dress with *"Marylike modesty, both at home and in public,"* they must be *"specially careful to do so when visiting any place dedicated to God."* It also taught that *"principles of proper clothing apply...also to men and boys."* Finally, it warned that by coming to church or other sacred places in any kind of immodest garb *"God is offended...very grievously."* Consequently, it made a special point of instructing anyone who had *"provoked the just anger of God by improper attire"* in holy places to *"humbly acknowledge and confess these sins...and make reparation to the offended Divine Majesty."*⁶⁵

These words of God's anger may sound severe to our hearing today, but let us be reminded of what was said before, that the only place in the Gospel where Jesus became severe was in the Temple of God, because as it is written of Him: *"The zeal of thy House hath eaten me up."* (Jn. 2:17).

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us be mindful that outward appearance produces great effects on those around us. These effects are so great that Pope Pius XII exclaimed:

"It is often said almost with passive resignation that fashions reflect the customs of a people. But it would be more exact and much more useful to say that they express the decision and moral direction that a nation intends to take:



"Those who serve God should not follow the fashions."

* For information on sources of genuinely modest swimwear (and other modest apparel) for women contact: **Little Flowers Family Apostolates** @ (613) 275-2490, or visit: littleflowersfamilypress.com.

either to be shipwrecked in licentiousness or maintain itself at the level to which it has been raised by religion and civilization.”⁶⁶

Therefore, Catholic men, women and children who do not take care to observe Christian modesty in dress cooperate in bringing about the moral destruction of our once Christian culture. On the other hand, Catholics who observe the *traditional form of dress* in their daily lives have the opportunity of being a positive moralizing effect upon the pagan world around them and thus they will work to once again restore Christian Civilization. As you can clearly see, to follow the Gospel in our times means to be counter-cultural.

APPENDIX:

An Examination of Conscience

First Commandment *I AM THE LORD THY GOD, THOU SHALT NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME*

- + The Catholic Religion is the one true religion. Have I neglected practicing my Catholic Faith?
- + Was I irreverent or disrespectful in the House of God? Did I talk in Church (See Section 6)?
- + Did I sin against the Sacraments? Did I receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin (Considered to be among the worst of mortal sins)? Did I receive Holy Communion without proper dispositions (See Section 7)? Did I deliberately withhold a mortal sin in Confession? Did I neglect any one of the five steps necessary for a worthy Confession (See Section 8)?
- + Have I deliberately doubted or denied any of the articles of faith?
- + Have I, who as a Catholic must participate in the only true worship worthy of God (The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass), actively participated in the services and worship of any non-Catholic religious organizations?
- + Am I a member of any non-Catholic religious organization, secret society (i.e. Masonic Lodges), cult or any other anti-Catholic group?
- + Have I been involved in any superstitious or satanic practices such as: consulting spiritualists and fortunetellers, fortune telling, witchcraft, séances, using crystals or Ouija boards, trusting in horoscopes, etc.?

Second Commandment *THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN*

- + Did I use God's Name or the Holy Name of Jesus in an irreverent manner? Did I speak of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Saints or of other holy things in an irreverent manner? Is this a habit of mine (perhaps when angry, frustrated or joking)?
- + Did I murmur against God?
- + Did I speak badly of the priesthood, of particular priests or of consecrated souls? [Sometimes it can be necessary to point out the errors of a priest to others in order that they are not led astray – this is certainly not sinful]
- + Did I swear or take an oath lightly (i.e. saying “honest to God” or “by God” etc.)?
- + Did I break any vows I have made to God?

Third Commandment *KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH*

- + Did I miss Mass a Sunday or on a Holy Day of obligation? Did I cause others to miss Mass? (Reminder: It is mortally sinful to miss Mass on Sunday without a serious reason).
- + Was I ever late for Mass through my own fault? Was I the cause for others to be late for Mass? Did I leave early?
- + Did I participate at Mass interiorly, or was I only bodily present?
- + Did I do any unnecessary servile work on Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation? Did I keep the spirit of these days of rest by spending more time in prayer and spiritual reading (i.e. Bible, Catechism, the Saints, etc.). Did I do any shopping without real necessity?
- + Did I keep *every Friday* as a day of penance by abstaining from meat or by doing some other worthy penance? Did I observe the Church's laws of fast and abstinence during Lent?

Fourth Commandment *HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER*

- + If I am a minor, or as an adult I still live at home, was I disobedient to my parents? Was I ever disrespectful towards them? As an adult, have I neglected them, or failed to care for them in sickness and old age?

- + Was I disobedient or disrespectful to others in positions of authority (i.e. bishops, priests, religious, guardians, teachers, police, judges, etc.)? Did I in any way abuse the position of authority I hold which is entrusted to me by God?
- + Do I have a rebellious spirit towards those in authority?
- + Did I mistreat my spouse or my children physically, verbally, emotionally?
- + As a husband, have I been irresponsible or negligent in my God-given role as the head of the family? Have I been attentive to the needs and concerns of my wife? (See Eph. 5: 22-25)
- + As a wife, have I failed to acknowledge my husband's authority? Have I been disobedient or disrespectful towards him? (See Eph. 5: 22-25)
- + As a parent, did I ever neglect the material needs of my children? Have I neglected their emotional and psychological needs? Have I been negligent in spending adequate time with them?
- + Did I fail to have them Baptized shortly after their births (This should ordinarily be done within 4 weeks)?
- + Did I fail to bring them up in the Faith by providing them with proper religious instruction? (Today, because much of religious education offered in the Church is compromised, often this instruction must be done at home). Did I fail to show them good Christian example in all the events of life? Did I neglect bringing them to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation? Did I neglect bringing them with proper frequency to the Sacrament of Penance?
- + Did I allow them to date or to go steady at too young an age? (Be aware that those who go steady should have marriage prospects in mind in the near future) Did I allow them to partake in dating practices that are occasions of sin (i.e. Spending too much time alone, staying out too late, etc.)?
- + Did I fail to take guard over the company they keep?
- + Did I fail to admonish, correct, discipline or punish them when they needed it? Was I ever too harsh in discipline?
- + Was I a source of scandal by arguing with my spouse or by using bad language in front of them?
- + Did I allow my children to don immodest garb? Have I been a bad example to them by not observing proper modesty (See Section 9 on Modesty)?

Fifth Commandment *THOU SHALT NOT KILL*

- + Did I take the life of another human being, or was I in some way a party to such an act?
- + Did I have an abortion? Did I pressure, encourage or aid someone in having an abortion?
- + Did I mutilate my own body? Did I have surgery as a means of artificial contraception?
- + Did I misuse alcohol, drugs? Did I deliberately become intoxicated? Did I endanger my own life or the lives of others by driving while intoxicated? Did I harm my body by misusing tobacco or food? Was I guilty of gluttony? Did I waste good food?
- + Did I physically harm anyone? Did I fight or quarrel with anyone?
- + Was I angry? Did I hate? Did I seek vengeance? Did I use insulting words? Did I hold a grudge? Did I fail to forgive?
- + Did I cooperate in another's sin: by direct and voluntary participation in it? By ordering, advising, praising or approving it (this could include silent approval)? By not hindering another from sin when obligated to do so? By protecting another in his sin?

Sixth And Ninth Commandments *THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY / THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE*

(Reminder: All willful sins against purity, whether in thought, word or deed, are mortal sins)

- + Did I deny my spouse his / her marriage rights? Did I abuse my marriage rights through unlawful acts?
- + Did I observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage?
- + Did I practice artificial birth control? Did I use a form of birth control that is known to abort such as the pill?
- + Did I commit adultery (sexual relations between a married person and a partner other than the lawful spouse)?
- + Did I commit fornication (sexual relations between unmarried partners, including those engaged to be married)?
- + Did I commit any unnatural sin against purity (homosexual acts, bestiality, etc.)?

- + Did I sin commit any sin of impurity alone (masturbation)?
- + Did I touch or embrace another impurely or in a manner in which to cause arousal? Did I engage in prolonged or passionate kissing?
- + Did I entertain or take pleasure in impure thoughts or fantasies? Did I take pleasure in thinking of sins of impurity I have committed in the past? Did I fail to distract myself when such thoughts entered my mind?
- + Did I willfully look at or think of another person in a lustful manner? Have I willfully indulged in any other type of unlawful sexual pleasure?
- + Was I an occasion of sin for others by carelessly following today's fashions and by not taking care to observe the Church's teaching on modesty (See Section 9 on Modesty)?
- + Did I provoke impure thought or desires in others by immodest words or actions? Did I tell indecent stories or jokes or did I willfully listen to them? Did I brag about my past sins of impurity?
- + Did I read or look at pornographic or other indecent literature and pictures (This includes romance novels, advertisements for immodest clothing, etc.)? Did I watch suggestive videos, movies or TV programs (including soap operas), or permit my children to do so?

Seventh And Tenth Commandments *THOU SHALT NOT STEAL / THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S GOODS*

- + Did I steal another's goods? Did I do serious harm to another by my theft?
- + Did I fail to respect other's property? Did I borrow without asking? Did I vandalize? Did I damage someone's property (willingly or unwillingly) and not take responsibility for it?
- + Did I cheat or defraud others? Did I cheat in school, in games or sports? Did I cheat others by unfair or dishonest business dealings? Did I cheat those who employ me? As an employer, did I cheat my employees of what is their due?
- + Did I refuse or neglect to pay any debts?
- + Did I fail to return what I have stolen (or, if this is not possible, to make restitution in some other way)?
- + Was I greedy with what I possess? Did I refuse or neglect to help anyone in need? Did I give grudgingly?

+ Did I covet, or was I envious of another's wealth or possessions? Did I take pleasure in another's misfortune? Did I boast about myself?

Eighth Commandment *THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR*

+ Did I lie in any way (this includes “white lies”)? Did I harm others by my lies?

+ Did I damage another's reputation by lying (calumny / slander)? Did I damage another's reputation by unnecessarily revealing his faults (detraction)?

+ Did I judge anyone rashly? (a deliberate judgment concerning a fault of another without sufficient evidence)?

+ Did I gossip about others or take joy in listening to uncharitable talk about others?

The Two Great Commandments of Love:

First *THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH THY WHOLE HEART, AND WITH THY WHOLE SOUL, AND WITH THY WHOLE MIND, AND WITH THY WHOLE SOUL*

+ Has God been **first place** in my life? What do I put before Him? Money? Possessions? Pleasure? Prestige? Human Respect? Selfish ambitions?

Second *THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF*

+ Have I realized that this commandment means that I must desire that my neighbor's needs be at least as well cared for as my own? Have I sacrificed my wants to take care of my neighbor's needs? Am I aware of Jesus' words that whatever I did or didn't do for the least of his brethren, I did or didn't do for Him? Have I realized my judgment will be largely based on how I have treated Jesus hidden in my neighbor (see Mt. 25)?

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EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE

“Fear and honor, praise and bless, thank and adore the Lord God Almighty, in Trinity and Unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of all things. Do not put off any longer confessing all your sins, for death will soon come. Give and it will be given you; forgive and you will be forgiven...Blessed are they who die repentant, for they shall go to the Kingdom of Heaven! But woe to those who are not converted, for these children of the Devil will go with their father into everlasting fire. Be watchful, therefore. Shun evil, and persevere in well-doing unto the end.”

— St. Francis of Assisi

One day, I saw two roads. One was broad, covered with sand and flowers, full of joy, music and all sorts of pleasures. People walked along it, dancing and enjoying themselves. They reached the end without realizing it. And at the end of the road there was a horrible precipice; that is the abyss of Hell. The souls fell blindly into it; as they walked, so they fell. And their number was so great that it was impossible to count them. And I saw the other road, or rather, a path, for it was narrow and strewn with thorns and rocks; and the people who walked along it had tears in their eyes, and all kinds of suffering befell them. Some fell down upon the rocks, but stood up immediately and went on. At the end of the road there was a magnificent garden filled with all sorts of happiness, and all these souls entered there. At the very first instant they forgot all their sufferings.