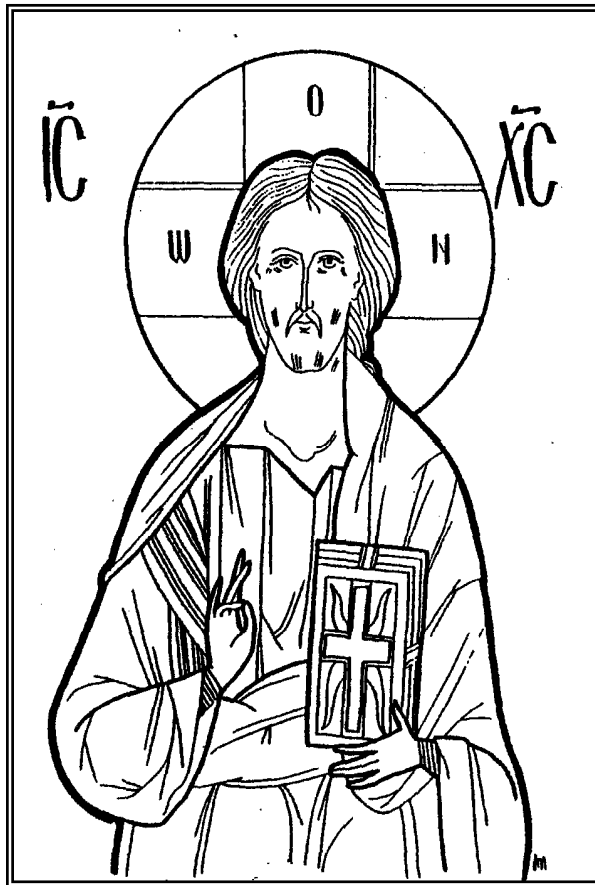


Preparing for the
**SACRAMENT OF
RECONCILIATION**
with an Examination of Conscience



St. Michael's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church
Carlsbad, California

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Hear the words in the parable of the prodigal son: *“But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”* St. Luke 15:20 (RSV)

Is there a more graphic description of a father’s initiating, forgiving love, unless it is the offering of His only Son on a cross? God is quick to forgive; His will is reconciliation.

Recognizing that this need for reconciliation lies deep within us all, God has given to His Church the ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness of sins. Order for Private Confession is made explicit in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, called “The Reconciliation of a Penitent,” as an optional form of confession to the “General Confession.” The former has several advantages:

- More time is given in private confession to an examination of conscience, thus a greater chance for inner peace is realized.
- In private confession there is a compassionate and understanding priest who presents a tangible presence of God’s forgiveness and encouragement. The power and authority of absolution reside in the Catholic priesthood by virtue of our Lord’s express declaration: *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.”* St. John 20:23 (RSV)
- There is the benefit of counsel and spiritual direction in private confession.
- When confessing one’s sins before a priest, who represents the community, there is the added assurance of the community’s forgiveness as well as God’s.

Anytime is appropriate for making one’s confession, but especially before Christmas and Easter. Preparing for one’s confession is preparing for a new life in Christ. God is quick to forgive and whatever we can do to prepare our penitent hearts will bring us the promise of reconciliation and joy.

The part of the person approaching this sacrament is repentance. True repentance has three elements:

1. **Contrition** or sorrow for sins. This can be obtained only at the foot of the Cross. We may not have an *emotion* of sorrow, but when we see what our sins have done to Jesus, we shall *be* sorry.
2. **Confession** of all known sin. This involves a careful examination of our conscience. We cannot confess our sins until we see exactly how we look to the all-seeing eye of God.
3. **Satisfaction and Amendment of Life.** We must intend to lead a new or better life. This intention is shown by our acceptance and performance of the penance imposed by the Priest in confession.

Examination of Conscience

O Holy Spirit, source of all light, wisdom, knowledge and understanding, enlighten us and help us to know our sins. Show us the evil we have done and the good we have neglected. Grant us heartfelt sorrow for our transgressions, knowing we have wounded the loving heart of our Heavenly Father; and help us to humbly acknowledge our sins that we may be washed clean in the precious blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

- Think of yourself as God's child, and of the wickedness of following Satan rather than your loving Father.
- Do not be in a hurry, and do not vex yourself because you cannot remember everything. Be honest with God and with yourself; this is all God asks of you.
- Write down briefly what you remember of your sins. Don't try to depend on your memory. If there is any question you do not understand, let it alone, and go on to the next one.
- Do not fret about your sins. Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned. *"A broken contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."* Psalm 51:18 (BCP)

SIN OF PRIDE

Pride is putting self in the place of God as the center of our life. It is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures or to be dependent on God for our existence. The sin of Pride has nine children:

1. IRREVERENCE

- a. Have you neglected the worship of God on Sundays in His Church?
- b. Have you disregarded other Holy Days as additional opportunities to give God honor?
- c. Have you failed to thank God adequately for who He is and what He has done?
- d. Have you been disrespectful of holy things or used holy things or practices for personal advantage or as a way to placate God?

2. SENTIMENTALITY

- a. Have you been satisfied with pious feelings and beautiful ceremonies without striving to obey God's will?

3. PRESUMPTION

- a. Have you been dependent on self rather than God, neglecting the sacraments and prayer, the means of grace?
- b. Have you been satisfied with spiritual achievement, not striving for continued growth?
- c. Have you refused to avoid occasions of temptation?
- d. Have you failed to recognize your job as a divine vocation or to offer your work to God?

- e. Have you excused yourself from menial tasks because of thinking of yourself as superior?
- f. Have you failed to offer to God regular intercession for persons or causes that should enlist your interest and support?

4. DISTRUST

- a. Have you refused to recognize God's wisdom, providence and love?
- b. Have you given in to worry, anxiety, depression, discouragement, pessimism, or self-pity, instead of fighting to be brave, cheerful, and hopeful?
- c. Have you attempted to discern or control the future by spiritualism, astrology, fortune telling, magic, or superstition?
- d. Have you been oversensitive or over-ready to expect rejection or be suspicious?
- e. Have you been timid in accepting responsibility or shown cowardice in facing difficulty or suffering?

5. DISOBEDIENCE

- a. Have you rejected God's known will in favor of your own interests or pleasures?
- b. Have you disobeyed legitimate laws or those in authority, whether Church, state, parents, teachers, etc., or been slow or reluctant to obey?
- c. Have you refused to learn God's nature or will through Scripture, worship, and prayer, or been so absorbed in your own affairs no time is left for the things of God?

6. IMPENITENCE

- a. Have you refused to search out and face up to and confess your sins to God?
- b. Have you discounted your sins as insignificant or natural or inevitable out of self-justification?
- c. Have you refused to accept just punishment, lied to escape consequences of sin, or have you allowed others to suffer the blame for your own faults?
- d. Have you refused to admit you were in the wrong or to apologize?
- e. Have you felt shame or sorrow for sin because of fear of punishment or of injury to your reputation, rather than sorrow for the sin itself?
- f. Have you refused to accept forgiveness from God, from yourself, or from others, or doubted God's willingness and ability to forgive?

7. VANITY

- a. Have you credited your talents, abilities, insights, and accomplishments to yourself rather than to God?
- b. Have you been a hypocrite?
- c. Have you failed to thank others for their help or to admit you needed help?

- d. Have you boasted, exaggerated, claimed to have virtues, experience, or talents you do not have, or behaved or dressed in a way to draw undue attention to yourself?

8. ARROGANCE

- a. Have you insisted that others conform to your wishes, or recognize your leadership?
- b. Have you been overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, or obstinate?

9. SNOBBERY

- a. Have you been prideful over race, family, position, personality, education, skill, achievements, or possessions?

THE SIN OF ENVY

Envy is dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation. It shows itself by begrudging the gifts and vocation of others. The sin of Envy has three children:

1. JEALOUSY

- a. Have you taken offense at the talents, success, or good fortune of others?
- b. Have you taken pleasure in the misfortunes of others?

2. MALICE

- a. Have you falsely accused others?
- b. Have you initiated, asked for, or passed on gossip?
- c. Have you deliberately annoyed, teased, criticized, or bullied others?

3. CONTEMPT

- a. Have you ridiculed another's virtue, ability, shortcoming, or failings?
- b. Have you been prejudiced against those you consider inferior or those who seem to threaten your security or position?

SIN OF COVETOUSNESS

Covetousness is the refusal to respect the integrity of others by the inordinate accumulation of material goods, or use of others for our personal advantage and quest for power and security. The sin of Covetousness has five children:

1. INORDINATE AMBITION

- a. Have you pursued status, power, influence, reputation, or possessions at the expense of morality, obligations, or the rights of others?
- b. Have you been unfair in competition or involved in conspiracy for self-advancement?

2. DOMINATION

- a. Have you used or tried to possess others?
- b. Have you been overprotective of your children or refused to correct or discipline them for fear of rejection?
- c. Have you imposed your desires and will for their vocation in life contrary to their own ideal?
- d. Have you imposed your will on others by force, whining, or refusal to cooperate?
- e. Have you used your authority abusively?
- f. Have you been patronizing or putting others under a debt of gratitude or considered yourself ill-treated when you could not win another's compliance or affection?
- g. Have you used respect, flattery, favoritism, partiality, or bribery to win support or affection?
- h. Have you failed to do good, speak the truth, or defend the wrongfully attacked because of fear of criticism or the need for approval of others?
- i. Have you tempted or encouraged another to sin?

3. AVARICE

- a. Have you pursued wealth or material things excessively?
- b. Have you stolen anything, been dishonest, misrepresented yourself, or shared in stolen goods?
- c. Have you cheated in business, taxes, school, or games?
- d. Have you made worldly success the goal of your life or the standard for judging others?

4. PRODIGALITY

- a. Have you wasted natural resources or personal possessions?
- b. Have you lived beyond your means to impress others or maintain status?
- c. Have you failed to pay debts or been careless with others' money?
- d. Have you gambled more than you can afford to lose?
- e. Have you spent on yourself money that was needed for the welfare of others?

5. PENURIOSNESS

- a. Have you been miserly or stingy with your wealth or security?
- b. Have you refused to support or help those for whom you are responsible?
- c. Have you failed to give a due proportion of your income to the Church and charity and of your time and energy to ministry and good works?
- d. Have you failed to pay pledges when able to do so?

SIN OF GLUTTONY

Gluttony is the overindulgence of natural appetites for food, drink, pleasure, and comfort. The sin of Gluttony has two children:

1. INTEMPERANCE

- a. Have you overindulged in food, drink, smoking, or other physical pleasures?
- b. Have you been overly difficult to please, or demanding of excessively high standards?
- c. Have you condemned material things or pleasures as evil in themselves, attempting to prohibit their use rather than their abuse?

2. LACK OF DISCIPLINE

- a. Have you been negligent in keeping days of fasting or abstinence or other needed means of self-discipline?
- b. Have you neglected your health by not getting sufficient rest, exercise, or nourishment?
- c. Have you failed to use or cooperate with available medical care when needed?
- d. Have you used sickness as a means to escape from responsibility?

SIN OF LUST

Lust is the misuse of sex for personal gratification, debasing it from the holy purpose for which God has given it to us. The sin of Lust has four children:

1. UNCHASTITY

- a. Have you violated your marriage vows by committing adultery or engaging in sexual indulgence outside matrimony in thought or act, alone or with others?
- b. Have you refused to give adequate care and nurture to your spouse and children, or to take your full share in the responsibilities or work involved?
- c. Have you failed to teach Christian sexual morality to your children?

2. IMMODESTY

- a. Have you sought to stimulate sexual desires in others by word, dress, or actions; or in yourself by using pornographic literature, pictures, or movies?
- b. Have you listened to or told dirty stories or jokes?

3. PRUDERY

- a. Have you been afraid of sex or condemned it as evil itself?
- b. Have you refused to seek adequate sexual instruction or prevented others from obtaining it?

4. CRUELTY

- a. Have you deliberately inflicted pain or power, mentally or physically, on people or animals?

SIN OF SLOTH

Sloth is the refusal to respond to opportunities for growth, service, or sacrifice. The sin of Sloth has two children:

1. LAZINESS

- a. Have you been purposefully slow in performing spiritual, mental, or physical duties; or neglected family, business, or social obligations or courtesies?
- b. Have you procrastinated or been involved in busyness or triviality to avoid important commitments?
- c. Have you devoted excessive time to rest, recreation, television, light reading, and the like?

2. INDIFFERENCE

- a. Have you been unconcerned over injustice to others or uncaring about suffering in the world?
- b. Have you failed to become adequately informed on contemporary issues or on Christian principles involved?
- c. Have you failed to provide adequately for or treat justly those under your employ?
- d. Have you ignored the needy, lonely, or unpopular persons in your own parish family or neighborhoods or classes or at work?
- e. Have you failed to provide sufficient attention to the religious needs of your family?
- f. Have you failed to take your place in Christian witness or to take your part in ministry in the Church to make holiness a reality on earth?

SIN OF ANGER

Anger is open rebellion against God or fellow human beings. The purpose of Anger is to eliminate any obstacle to our self-seeking or security and to avenge any insult or injury. The sin of Anger has three children:

1. RESENTMENT

- a. Have you refused to discern, accept, or fulfill God's call in your life?
- b. Have you been dissatisfied with talents, abilities, or opportunities He has given you?
- c. Have you been unwilling to face up to difficulties or sacrifices, or unjustly complained about life's circumstances?
- d. Have you blamed God, parents, society, or other individuals for your own failings?
- e. Have you hated God or others?
- f. Have you used the Name of God and of the Lord Jesus in a profane way?

2. PUGNACITY

- a. Have you attacked another in anger either physically or verbally or by damaging reputation or property?
- b. Have you committed murder either in deed or desire?
- c. Have you held grudges?
- d. Have you been quarrelsome, rude or snubbed others?

3. RETALIATION

- a. Have you exercised or plotted revenge on another for wrongs real or imagined?
- b. Have you dealt harsh or excessive punishment to those under your authority or care?
- c. Have you refused to forgive or accept forgiveness?
- d. Have you been unwilling to love, or do good to or pray for your enemies?
- e. Have you boycotted or ostracized another for selfish reasons?
- f. Have you purposefully spoiled another's pleasure because of not getting your own way or because of feeling out of sorts or superior?
- g. Have you been impatient?

Prayer after Self-Examination

O my God, how great are my sins! Would that I had never offended thee. If by carelessness or ignorance I have forgotten anything in my self-examination, show it to me now that I may make a good confession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Some Practical Procedures

1. Make an appointment with a priest or come during scheduled confession times **having already prepared.**
2. The Sacrament of Penance is held in Old St. Michael's Chapel.
3. Remain in the back pews until the priest is available for confession.
4. If no one is at the altar rail, come forward and kneel at the rail in front of the priest. **Bring your list with you.**
5. A "Form of Confession" (see the back of this booklet) will be provided at the rail. Begin immediately.
6. Following the absolution, return to the back pew for your penance and prayer.
7. Leave the chapel quietly when finished. Discreetly discard your list.

Form of Confession

When your turn comes, kneel at the altar rail where the priest is sitting, and say immediately:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

When the priest has given you his blessing, say, without further delay:

**I confess to God Almighty,
to Blessed Mary ever virgin,
to Blessed Michael the Archangel,
to all the saints, and to you, Father,
that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed,
by my fault, by my own fault,
by my own grievous fault.**

Especially since my last confession which was _____,

I accuse myself of the following sins: _____.

Without exaggerating or extenuating the offenses of which you may be conscious, tell them, as if to God Himself, with a humble, sorrowful and contrite heart. When you have finished telling your sins, say:

For these and all other sins which I cannot now remember, I am heartily sorry, I firmly propose amendment, and ask of you, Father, penance, counsel and absolution.

Listen attentively to anything the Priest may have to say; humbly accept the penance he imposes, and when he raises his hand in absolution, make the sign of the cross. Return to your place for your penance and thanksgiving after the absolution.

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