

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

*When we go to Confession we meet Jesus who takes us to himself and, because we are in him and because we are sorry, God our Father forgives us.*

*Each time we sin, we damage the loving relationship that exists between God our Father and ourselves, between Jesus our Brother and ourselves, between the Holy Spirit and ourselves, and between ourselves and the Church. Each time we sin even though the sin may be an entirely private affair we harm the other members of God's family. We are all members of Christ's Body, the Church. A sin hurts us individually and so affects all other members. St. Paul writes: 'If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it'. (I Corinthians 12:26) That is why it is not just enough to apologize to God, we must also apologize to God's people, whose deputy is the priest.*

*So when we go to confession although what we say to the priest and what he says to us is absolutely private, what we are doing is something public. It is much more than when in the privacy of our bedrooms, during our night prayers, we kneel down and tell God we are sorry.*

### For Individual Use

I may begin by asking the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus to help me to realize how I need God's pardon, that he will move me to be truly sorry, that he will help me to see myself as I really am and so search out my sins and failings.

*This prayer would be best said in your own words. The following is only a suggestion:*

O Spirit of Jesus be with me now.

I have sinned and I stand in need of pardon and help.

Lead me to true sorrow for my sins.

I ask you to help me to search my mind.

If you do not help me, I shall see only what I want to see. I shall make excuses for myself.

And so I ask you to help me to look at my daily living.

Let me see myself as I truly am.

*With those at home and also those who are related to me but who do not live under the same roof.*

Have I treated them with the dignity and respect they deserve as well loved children of God? Have I consistently tried love them as Christ loves them, even at a cost to my convenience? Or have I been selfish at home, moody, inconsiderate of others' feelings, neither sharing things with them, nor working with them for the good of all?

My relationship with my parents? Grandparents?

My relationship with my children?

My relationship with my husband/wife?

*With those at work:*

Have I cooperated with them for the good of all?

Have I been honest with my employer/employees/teachers – in the matter of time-keeping, work materials, and quality of work?

*With those I meet:*

Have I been considerate towards other road-users?

Next I may think of the gifts God has given me. Have I used them to the best of my ability? Have I used them to make this world of his a better place?

*The Gift of Health and Strength*

Have I damaged it by over-eating, abusing stimulants of any kind, over-smoking or lack of sleep? Am I involved in addictive behavior?

*The Gift of Intelligence*

Have I hampered its use through spending too much time watching or reading things that are harmful, or in day-dreaming, or in futile conversation?

### *The Gift of Work*

Have I tried to work honestly and well? Have I used at least part of my money for the relief of suffering in those less fortunate than myself?

### *The Gift of Sight*

Have I used my eyes as God my Father would have wanted, to notice the needs of others, to enjoy and be amazed at all the good things around me? Or have I used my sight to photograph for my mind images that will later be used as sinful memories?

Has my sight led me to look critically at others, searching for the speck that is there while I ignore the planks of wood lodged in my own eyes?

### *The Gift of Hearing*

Have I used my ability to hear as God my Father would have wished - to listen to other people, to listen to the suggestions my colleagues make, to listen to the request my own family make of me? Am I a listening person or am I still immature and show it by boring other people with stories about myself?

### *The Gift of Speech*

Have I used it as God my Father would have wished relate only the good I hear about people, and not the bad? To bring about harmony and unity between people, races, creeds. Or, have I been harsh and critical in my speech, condemning others, relating gossip, blackening people's characters, unkind *to* people and unkind *about* people? Have I spoken the truth?

### *The Gift of Sex*

Have I used (or not used) this gift as God my Father would have wished? Or have I betrayed his trust in me by misusing this precious gift, using it before he sanctions its use through the Sacrament of Marriage, or using it selfishly simply for my own pleasure and not as an expression of love towards my spouse?

### *The Gift of Leisure*

Have I used my leisure time constructively? Have I allowed my use of leisure to encroach on my family duties? Have I spent more on my leisure and comforts than I have offered in care for others and for the support of my Parish?

Lastly I may think of my relationship with God my Father, Jesus my Brother, the Holy Spirit. Have I spoken with God as a real father, or have I ignored him, or just gabbed a few prayers from time to time?

Have I been concerned for God's honor, wanting his name known and loved by all? Have I had faith in the realness of Jesus, close to me now? Have I trusted him and realized that if I am not in him I am worth nothing? Have I loved him and shown my love by 'keeping his commandments' and showing the same love to others as he showed to me?

Have I listened to the Holy Spirit? Have I tried to do as he told me? Have I believed that I can do no good of myself but only in the power the Holy Spirit gives me.

Now I try to express my sorrow in prayer. Again, the words I make up myself are the best.

*The following prayer is no more than an example:*

O God my Father, I am truly sorry for having turned away from your friendship. You have shown only love towards me, and I have sometimes shown little love in return.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus, who died and rose again for me, forgive me all my sins.

I will try to make a fresh start with this confession. But I can do nothing unless your Holy Spirit helps me to lead a life such as Jesus led, a life spent forgetful of himself, in the service of others.