

# THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## *Examination of Conscience* & *Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation*

In order to prepare yourself to celebrate well the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to have a greater understanding of this important sacrament in your life and the life of the Church, please take some time reflecting on this leaflet.

You have come to experience the Lord's forgiveness and compassion. It is a very personal moment in your relationship with God.

To get the most from your confessional *encounter with Christ*, you should prepare well. You should arouse in yourself a deep, true sorrow for your sins, how they have offended against God who loves us infinitely, and how they have hurt our fellow brothers and sisters who so need our help. You should not try to search out each and every sin – serious attitudes of sin will usually come to mind immediately, nor should you waste time in a spiral of regrets.

Please remember that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is above all an act of God's love, it is a personal moment to be lived in a relationship of love with God. It is not a routine (or an ordeal) to be gone through, but very much part of the *personal renewal* of our relationship with Jesus Christ and his Gospel call to discipleship which takes place in each person.

You are invited in the light of God's love:

- to recognize the sinfulness in your life
- to have a true sorrow for these sin
- and a firm intention to avoid them in the future

These elements are essential to a proper and meaningful celebration of the Sacrament.

Sin is not merely a series of failures. It is also your sharing in what is actually evil:

- unbelief, indifference, selfishness
- violence, contempt for the weak, eroticism
- racism, neglect of the poor
- money seeking, wastefulness
- a spirit of pride and superiority

Every sin, in one way or another, has a *community dimension*. It is something which tarnishes the Body of Christ, which together, we are. Every sin ought to arouse in us feeling of humble regret and confident request for pardon and peace.

**Today my heavenly Father is waiting for me, I must return to him...**

Then the prodigal son came to his senses and said: "I will leave this place and go to my Father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'" While he was still a long way off, his Father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. The Father said: "Quick, bring out the best robe... this son of mine was dead and has come back to life..." (Luke 15)

**Our heavenly Father awaits us in the same way**

Following the example of the prodigal son, examine your conscience in the light of the Gospel and find out when you have behaved contrary to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in thought, words, and deeds.

**Jesus said: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart..."**

- Is my heart set on God, so that I really love Him above all things?
- Am I open to His presence?
- Do I listen to the words of the Gospel? To the teachings of Christ's Church?
- What place has prayer in my life?
- Is the Eucharist the center of my Christian life?
- Do I take part regularly in Mass on Sundays and Feasts?
- Do I allow the Lord to be the Lord, or do I try to be the Lord myself?
- Do I cling to my will, my wants, my ways?
- Have I love and reverence for the name of God?
- Am I ashamed to witness to my faith in God in my daily life?
- Do I rebel against taking up the Cross which God sends?
- Do I turn to God only when I am in need?

**Jesus said: "Love your neighbor as yourself..."**

- Have I a genuine love for my neighbors?
- Am I well-disposed, able to forgive offences?
- Do I judge without mercy in thoughts and words?
- Do I speak ill, slander, steal?
- Am I intolerant, envious, and hot-tempered?
- Do I take care of the poor, the sick, and defenseless people?
- Am I sincere and honest in my dealings with others?
- Have I been the cause of another's committing sin?
- In my family life, have I contributed to the well-being and happiness of the rest of the family by patience and genuine love?
- Do I exercise responsible parenthood according to the teachings of the Church?
- Do I care for and respect the environment in which I live?
- Do I seek the well-being of others?
- Do I think enough about those who are less fortunate?
- Am I a spectator before people's problems, or do I help?
- Do I despise those of another creed, color of opinion?
- Am I respectful of other people's property?
- Have I abused of someone's property or stolen or coveted another's goods?
- Do I forgive those who sin against me?
- Do I do my duty as a citizen?
- Do I respect legitimate authority?

**Jesus said: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."**

- Do I truly live as a Christian and give good example to others?
- Have I gone against my conscience out of fear or hypocrisy?
- Have I participated in things which offend both Christian and human decency?
- Am I too concerned about myself, my health, my success?
- Do I go to excess in matters of food and drink?
- Have I kept my senses and my whole body pure and chaste as a temple of the Holy Spirit?
- Do I bear grudges; do I contemplate revenge?
- Do I share my possessions with the less fortunate?
- Am I always ready to take offence and act impatiently?
- Do I use the gift of time well?
- Am I able to forgive myself?
- Do I seek to be humble and bring peace?

## Rite of Reconciliation

Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is most comfortable for you.

1. The priest gives you a blessing or greeting. He may share a brief Scripture passage.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say: *"Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..."* (give the number of weeks, months or years)
3. Confess all your sins to the priest. The priest will help you make a good confession. If you are unsure about how to confess or feel uneasy, just ask him to help you. Answer his questions without hiding anything out of fear or shame. Place your trust in God, our merciful Father that wants to forgive you.
4. Following your confession, say: *"I am sorry for these and all my sins."*
5. The priest assigns you a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic Christian.
6. Say an Act of Contrition expressing your sorrow for your sins. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

## An Act of Contrition

O my God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I fully intend, with your help, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen.

### ADVENT 2014 CONFESSION SCHEDULE

#### Monday, December 1

Flather, Regan, Ryan, Reardon, Walton

#### Tuesday, December 2

Caldwell/Seton, Engelhard, Millennium North & South, Opus

#### Wednesday, December 3

Curley Court, Crough Center

#### Thursday, December 4

Camalier, McDonald, Magner, Quinn, Unanue, Gibbons

**All confessions are from 8:00-10:00pm**