

FATHER RON'S LENTEN REFLECTION

Examination of Conscience – Part One

Two of the *Precepts of the Catholic Church* tells us that we shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter Season, and that we shall confess our sins at least once a year. For many, either Lent or Advent are their annual Confession time.

I would like to take this opportunity on this Third Sunday in Lent where our First Reading reminds us of the Ten Commandments to begin a brief Catechesis on the *Examination of Conscience* which I will continue for the next two weeks.

This Examination is based on the excellent work of Benedictus Dominus and the Midwest Theological Forum.

This week, I am going to review the first three Commandments...those directed to our relationship to God. The next weekend I will review the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Commandments...and the remainder the following week.

In your quiet time, please reflect on these words in relationship to your life.

The First Commandment:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is the water under the Earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

- ❖ Do I *nourish and protect my faith* with prudence and vigilance?
- ❖ Do I *reject everything that is opposed to the Catholic Faith*?
- ❖ Do I have *voluntary doubt* about the faith which discards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief?
- ❖ Do I have *involuntary doubt* that causes hesitation in belief, difficulty in overcoming objections to the faith, or anxiety aroused by its obscurity?
- ❖ Do I experience *incredulity* in the revealed truth or refuse to assent to it?
- ❖ Through acts of *heresy*, am I obstinate by denying or doubting some truth which must be believed with divine and Catholic faith?
- ❖ In *apostasy*, do I repudiate the total Christian faith?
- ❖ Do I support *schism* within the Church by refusing to submit to the Holy Father or those subjected to him?

- ❖ In *despair*, do I cease to hope in my personal salvation from God, and his forgiveness of my sins?
- ❖ Do I commit the *Sin of Presumption* by assuming that my own actions will save my soul, or presume on God's mercy instead of making a firm purpose of amendment to cease a pattern of sin in my life?
- ❖ Am I *indifferent* by neglecting or refusing to reflect on Divine Charity and its goodness and power in my life?
- ❖ Do I experience *ingratitude* by failing to acknowledge Divine Charity and return love to God for that charity?
- ❖ In *lukewarmness*, do I hesitate or neglect in responding to God's Divine love and his intervention in my life?
- ❖ Am I *slothful* by refusing the joy that comes from a relationship with God?
- ❖ Do I *hate God* out of my own pride?
- ❖ Am I *superstitious* in my religious devotions?
- ❖ Do I commit acts of *idolatry* by honoring or revering someone or something in place of God based on its power or pleasure?
- ❖ Through *divination*, do I give power to Satan, evil spirits, horoscopes, astrology, or other acts of clairvoyance?
- ❖ Through acts of *magic or sorcery*, do I call upon occult powers?

- ❖ Do I ***tempt God*** by putting his goodness and power to the test in my word or deed?
- ❖ Through acts of ***sacrilege***, do I profane or treat unworthily the sacraments or other liturgical actions as well as persons, things, or places consecrated to God?
- ❖ Through acts of ***simony***, do I buy or sell spiritual things?
- ❖ Or simply, in ***atheism***, do I reject or deny the existence of God?

The Second Commandment:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

- ❖ Do I ***abuse the name of God***, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, or any of the saints?
- ❖ Do I ***make promises to others in God's name*** - - thus engaging his divine honor, fidelity, truthfulness and authority in that promise?
- ❖ In ***misusing God's name***, do I make God a liar as opposed to respecting the justice of his Divine Power?
- ❖ Do I ***blaspheme against God*** by uttering words of hatred, reproach, or defiance; or by speaking ill of God, disrespecting him in my speech, or misusing his name - - either *inwardly or outwardly*?
- ❖ Do I ***blaspheme against the Church***, the saints, or sacred things?

- ❖ Do I *misuse the name of God* by covering up criminal practices, by reducing people to servitude, by torturing persons physically or psychologically or emotionally, or by putting them to death?
- ❖ Have I *used God's name to commit a crime* thus resulting in the loss of faith by others?
- ❖ Do I *disrespect God* through the misuse of his name?
- ❖ Do I *invoke God's name in magical practices*?
- ❖ Do I *make false oaths* by not recognizing that in taking that oath I am making God a witness to what I am affirming?
- ❖ Do I recognize that the *use of God's name is a serious act* if used to attest to my truthfulness?
- ❖ In invoking God's name, *are my words in accord with or in opposition to God* who is Truth itself?
- ❖ Do my words *respect God's truth* or am I asking God to be a witness to a lie?
- ❖ Do I commit *perjury* by promising under oath to an action with no intention of keeping it...or not keeping it after the promise has been made?
- ❖ Do I recognize that an oath is not only a commitment to the one who administers the oath, but *an oath is a commitment to God*?

- ❖ Do I make oaths to commit an evil deed?
- ❖ Are the civil oaths that I make *oaths made only in truth, in judgment, and in justice?*
- ❖ Do I *reject oaths through illegitimate civil authorities?*
- ❖ Do I take *oaths that are contrary to the dignity of persons or to Church unity?*

The Third Commandment:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work. The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.

- ❖ Do I recognize that the Christian ceremonial observance of *Sunday represents a day of rest from the servitude of work and the worship of money?*
- ❖ Do I recognize that *Holy Days are to be treated with the same dignity as Sundays?*

- ❖ Do I recognize that my Sunday and Holy Day *obligation to attend Mass can be excused only for a serious reason* such as illness, care of infants, or dispensation of the Pastor?
- ❖ Do I recognize that on Sundays and Holy Days, I should *refrain from work or activities that hinder the worship due to God, that prevent the joy proper to the Lord's Day, that inhibit the performance of works of mercy and social service, that neglect family needs, or that deny the appropriate relaxation of mind and body?*
- ❖ Are any of my *actions on Sundays or Holy Days prejudicial to religion, family life or health?*
- ❖ Do I make *unnecessary demands on others* that might hinder them from observing the Lord's Day?
- ❖ If I *work in a traditional Sunday activity*, such as sports, restaurants, or public services on Sundays and Holy Days, do I *still set aside time for sufficient leisure?*
- ❖ As an employer, do I ensure time for rest and Divine Worship for my employees?

If any of these questions invoke a spiritual response, we have a 1000 hours of Confession each year here at the Cathedral Basilica... let's talk!