

# An Examination of Conscience for Children

Jesus loved children. As a child himself, he was raised by Joseph and Mary in their home at Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:23). Growing up among relative and townspeople, Jesus experienced the concerns and problems common to all children, such as sickness and death among family members. Within this setting, Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:40).

Recalling these examples of Jesus’ attention to children sets the proper context for helping children examine the conscience and preparing them for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament allows Jesus to express his love for children today. Through it, he continues to influence their lives; he demonstrates his power to heal them, to free them from the bondage of sin, and raise them to new life. In turn, this sacrament allows children to come to know and love Jesus. For these reasons, Jesus still exhorts us: “Let the children come!”

## **Responsibilities to God:**

- Have I prayed every day?
- Have I prayed my morning prayers and night prayers?
- Have I prayed with my parents and family?
- Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?
- Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me do what is right?

## **Responsibilities to others:**

- Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
- Have I lied or been deceitful to them or to others?
- Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?
- Have I talked back to parents, teachers or other adults?
- Have I pouted and been moody?
- Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers, and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates?
- Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?
- Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
- Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?
- Have I used bad language?
- Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?
- Have I performed my responsibilities, such as homework and household chores?
- Have I been helpful and affectionate toward my family?
- Have I been kind and generous with my friends?

### **Before Confession:**

- Prepare by making an Examination of Conscience
- A prayer before Confession:

Dear Jesus,  
help me to make a good Confession,  
help me to find out my sins,  
help me to be sorry for them,  
help me to make up my mind not to sin again.  
Have mercy on me, O Lord, and forgive me.  
Mary, my mother, pray for me.

### **During Confession:**

- Greeting: Make the Sign of the Cross in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- Say: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been \_\_\_\_ (weeks, months, years) since my last confession."
- Confess your sins using the Examination of Conscience. If you are unsure of what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: "I am sorry for these and all my sins."
- Penance: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be a prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.
- Act of Contrition: Say an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to leave sin behind and live more like Jesus Christ. Say:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart.  
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.  
With your help, I firmly intend to do penance,  
to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior, Jesus Christ, suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy.

- Absolution: The priest then blessed you in the person of Christ as he says the prayer of Absolution which frees you from your sins.

### **After Confession:**

- Rejoice that through the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation God has reminded you of his unending love!
- Follow through with the penance the priest gave you