



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR PRIESTS

1. *"It is for their sakes that I sanctify myself, so that they, too, may be sanctified by the truth"* (Jn 17:19).

Do I really take holiness seriously in my priesthood? Am I convinced that the success of my priestly ministry comes from God and that, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, I have to identify myself with Christ and give my life for the salvation of the world?

2. *"This is my body"* (Mt 26:26).

Is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the centre of my spiritual life? Do I prepare well to celebrate Mass? Do I devoutly celebrate the Mass? Do I make an act of thanksgiving after Mass? Is the Mass the centre of my day in giving thanks and praise to God for his blessings? Do I have recourse to his goodness? Do I make reparation for my sins and for those of all mankind?

3. *"Zeal for your house consumes me"* (Jn 2:17).

Do I celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass according to the rites and rubrics established by the Church? Do I celebrate Holy Mass with a right intention and according to the approved liturgical books? Am I attentive to the sacred species conserved in the tabernacle and careful to renew it periodically? Do I pay due attention to the sacred vessels and ensure their conservation? Do I wear in a dignified fashion all of the sacred vestments prescribed by the Church? Am I conscious that I act *in persona Christi Capitis*?

4. *"Remain in my love"* (Jn 15:9).

Do I enjoy being in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, in meditation and in silent adoration? Am I faithful to the daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament? Is the tabernacle my true treasure?

5. *"Explain the parable to us"* (Mt 13:36).

Do I carefully make a daily meditation and try to overcome all distractions that separate me from God? Do I seek illumination from the Lord whom I serve? Do I assiduously meditate on the Sacred Scriptures? Do I carefully say my habitual prayers?

6. *It is necessary to "pray always and without tiring"* (Lk 18:1)

Do I celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours every day in an integral, dignified, attentive and devout manner? Am I faithful to my commitment to Christ in this important aspect of my ministry, praying in the name of the entire Church?

7. *"Come and follow me"* (Mt 19:21).

Is the Lord Jesus Christ the true love of my life? Do I joyfully observe my commitment to love before God in celibate continence? Am I given to impure thoughts, desires or actions? Do I indulge in improper conversation? Have I allowed myself to be in the proximate occasion of sin against chastity? Do I observe custody of the eyes? Have I been prudent in my dealings with the various categories of persons? Does my life represent for the faithful a true witness to the fact that holy purity is possible, fruitful and joyful?

8. *"Who are you?"* (Jn 1:20).

In my daily life, am I weak, lazy or indolent? Do my conversations conform to a sense of the natural and supernatural that a priest should have? Am I careful to ensure that there are no elements of vanity or superficiality in my life? Are all my actions consistent with my priestly state?

9. *"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"* (Mt. 8:20).

Do I love Christian poverty? Does my heart belong to God? Am I spiritually detached from everything else? Am I prepared to make sacrifices to better serve God? Am I prepared to give up my comforts, personal plans, and legitimate contacts, for God? Do I possess superfluous things? Do I make unnecessary expenditure or am I taken over by consumerism? Do I use my free time so as to be close to God remembering that I am always a priest – even at these times of rest or vacation?

10. *"You have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to mere children"* (Mt 11:25).

Am I guilty of the sins of pride: spiritual difficulties, susceptibility, irritation, unwillingness to forgive, tendencies to despondency, etc.? Do I ask God to give me the virtue of humility?

11. *“And there flowed out blood and water”* (Jn 19:34).

Am I convinced that when I act “in the person of Christ” I am directly involved with the same Body of Christ, the Church? Can I sincerely say that I love the Church? Can I sincerely say that I strive with joy for her growth? Am I concerned for her interests, those of all her members and for the whole human race?

12. *“You are Peter”* (Mt 16:18).

Nihil sine Episcopo – nothing without the Bishop – was a saying of St Ignatius of Antioch. Are these words at the root of my ministry? Do I receive orders, counsels or correction from my Ordinary with docility? Do I pray often for the Holy Father? Am I in full communion with his teaching and intentions?

13. *“Love one another”* (Jn 13:34).

Have I been charitable in dealing with my brother priests? Does my egoism leave me indifferent to them? Have I criticised my brother priests? Have I supported those who are morally or physically ill? Am I committed to fraternal action so that no one is ever left alone? Do I treat all my brother priests and all of the laity with the charity and patience of Christ?

14. *“I am the way, the truth and the life”* (Jn 14:6).

Is my knowledge of the teaching of the Church as comprehensive as it should be? Do I assimilate and transmit her teachings? Am I conscious that to teach something contrary to the Magisterium, solemn or ordinary, is gravely abusive and causes damage to the faithful?

15. *“Go and sin no more”* (Jn 8:11).

Proclamation of the Word leads the faithful to the Sacraments. Do I regularly go to Confession? Do I frequently go to Confession in accordance with my state of life and because of the sacred things with which I am involved? Do I generously celebrate the Sacrament of Penance? Am I reasonably available to the faithful for spiritual direction and do I set particular times aside for this purpose? Do I carefully prepare to instruct in catechesis? Do I preach with zeal and with the love of God?

16. *“He called those to himself whom he willed and these went with him”* (Mk 3:13).

Am I careful to promote vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life? Do I promote a greater awareness of the universal call to holiness among the faithful? Do I encourage the faithful to pray for vocations and for the sanctification of the clergy?

17. *“The Man came not to be served but to serve”* (Mt 20:28).

Have I sought to devote myself to others and serve them every day according to the demands of the Gospel? Do I give witness to the Lord’s charity by good works? Do I see the presence of Christ in the Cross and do I see in it the triumph of love? Is my daily activity marked by a spirit of service? Do I consider the exercise of authority as a form of service?

18. *“I thirst”* (Jn 19:28).

Have I prayed and generously made sacrifices for the good of the souls entrusted to my care by God? Do I discharge my pastoral duties? Am I solicitous for the Holy Souls?

19. *“Behold your son. Behold your mother”* (Jn 19: 26-27).

Do I entrust myself, full of hope, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Priests, through love and to love all the more her son Jesus Christ? Do I practice Marian devotion? Do I say the Rosary every day? Do I have recourse to her maternal intercession in my struggles with the devil, concupiscence, and the world?

20. *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”* (Lk 23:44).

Am I solicitous in assisting and in administering the sacraments to the dying? In my personal meditation, in catechesis and in my ordinary preaching, do I give consideration to the Church’s teaching on the Last Things? Do I ask for the grace of perseverance? Do I ask the faithful to do likewise? Do I make frequent and devout suffrage for the souls of the faithful departed?

READINGS AND TEXTS
for further reflection or celebrations

BIBLE READINGS

From *John's Gospel*, 15:14-17

From *Luke's Gospel*, 22:14-27

From *John's Gospel*, 20:19-23

From the *Letter to the Hebrews*, 5:1-10

PATRISTIC READINGS

St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *On the Priesthood*, III, 4-5; 6.

ORIGEN, *Homilies on Leviticus*, 7, 5.

READINGS FROM THE MAGISTERIUM

Gaudium et Spes, n. 19 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 27.

JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday*, 2001.

Benedict XVI, *Homily of Holy Thursday*, April 13, 2006.

READINGS from the WRITINGS of the SAINTS

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, *Dialogues*, 4, 59.

SAINT CATHERINE FROM SIENA, *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*, Ch. 116; cfr. SI 104, 15.

SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX, Ms A 56r; LT 108; LT 122; LT 101; Pr n. 8.

BLESSED CHARLES DE FOUCAULD, *Ecrits Spirituels*, pp. 69-70.

SAINT TERESA BENEDICT OF THE CROSS (EDITH STEIN), WS, 23.

PRAYER FOR THE HOLY CHURCH AND FOR PRIESTS

O my Jesus, I beg You on behalf of the whole Church:
Grant it love and the light of Your Spirit,
and give power to the words of Priests
so that hardened hearts might be brought to repentance and return to You, O Lord.
Lord, give us holy Priests;
You yourself maintain them in holiness.
O Divine and Great High Priest,
may the power of Your mercy
accompany them everywhere and protect them
from the devil's traps and snares
which are continually being set for the soul of Priests.
May the power of Your mercy,
O Lord, shatter and bring to naught
all that might tarnish the sanctity of Priests,
for You can do all things.

My beloved Jesus,
I pray to you for the triumph of the Church,
that you may bless the Holy Father and all the clergy;
I beg you to grant the grace of conversion
to sinners whose hearts have been hardened by sin,
and a special blessing and light to priests,
to whom I shall confess for all of my life.

(Saint Faustina Kowalska)