

## **An Examination Of Conscience From The Perspective Of Love**

An introduction:

“His mother kept all things in her heart (Lk 2:51). Something more than a mere act of memory is meant here. What is involved is living faithfulness, not only of a spirit reflecting about what has been seen and heard, but of a conscience which draws on and respects the consequences and finally of a heart meditating on it and penetrating its depths. Life is nourished with the truth that has been received and retained, and the truth perceived is nourished by experience of life.” Congar, Page 26

As you begin, invite the Holy Spirit into your reflection. Ask him to help you reflect on these questions, and then allow him to use some of the following points to bring to mind sin and/or areas where he wants to work in you. He might bring memories to the forefront, allow certain emotions to come to the forefront as signs that he wants to work there. You might experience some sense of resonance when you read something that he wants to talk about. Spend a moment or so with that one before moving on. Some of these questions may be directed to your subconscious. Don't be concerned about allowing them into the light. We are all sinners, and the Holy Spirit wants to heal anything hidden in the dark.

Spend a moment meditating on the following:

God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. ... We love because he first loved us. ... This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 Jn 4:19-21.

### **Examination of Conscience**

(The following are excerpts from books that were turned into examine questions. The author's name follows the quote, and the list of books is at the end. Not all of these are sins, but good food for thought.)

Do I have faith that God is trustworthy and will never abandon me? If not, why not? Barthelemy

Fr. Barthelemy said Original Sin was rooted in a lack of confidence in God's goodness and love, and below is a list of specific factors that he highlighted. Do any of these resonate with you?

- they did not trust in God's providence and in his loving nature and his care for us.
- He said there was a fear that they were being lied to, held in check by these lies, and subordinated (being enslaved) to God.
- That there was a sense of needing to free ourselves from this perceived slavery.

Do I have trouble believing true intimacy with God is impossible? If so, why? What is at the heart of this inability to believe. Barthelemy

Do I believe that God loves me unconditionally?

Can I look at God with confidence and see him as Father? If not, why not? Barthelemy

Do I find myself unable to bear God's gaze? Does his loving gaze draw me to himself or cause me to look away? If so, what is at the heart of looking away? Barthelmy

Theologians today present the Trinity as an invitation to enter into a communion of love and friendship with a God who loves us without limits." How do I respond to this invitation? McCaffrey

Is my charity following an interior movement of God towards other humans? If not, name the obstacle(s)? Olson

As a created being, do I recognize myself as wholly dependent upon and eternally subordinated to God? If not, what is holding me back? Olson

Do I allow a voice of self-rejection to contradict the sacred voice that calls me the "Beloved," instead of listening to the voice that expresses this core truth of my existence. Nouwen

Do I gratefully recognize charity as a gift from God that binds us together, and that this charity has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit? Olson

Do I allow the Old Man referenced in Paul's letters to convince me that God is similar to a human who judges, holds an ungenerous heart and sentiments of rancor and spite against all who rebel against him? Do I believe he requires me to humiliate myself in reparation before he will accept me back? Barthelmy

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the created soul re-creates otherwise "merely" humans into divinely adopted children of God. While the incarnate reality of Jesus Christ is both the cause and the pattern of this new life in God, the Holy Spirit is the one who unites us both to Christ as well as to his Christian people. Am I cooperating or blocking his efforts? Olson

Do I offer God the rebellion of my lower nature, and offer myself to God in my state of weakness, misery, and apparent defeat, or do I seek to offer him the fruit of my personal efforts at sanctification? Keating

Am I yielding myself into the hands of the living God, and allowing him to guide my efforts of putting the Old Man to death, and guiding me through the transformative process of becoming the new man in Christ? Barthelmy

Augustine's favored ecclesial image is the "totus Christus." The role of the Church is not only as the Body of Christ but as the "whole Christ." Based on this, do I go to mass just as an individual or as part of the whole Christ? Olson/Augustine

Augustine, believed in the true presence, but also believed it was the recipient's role in receiving the Eucharist to become Christ; that the mystery of the Eucharist also means that we have been placed on the Lord's table. By replying "Amen" we express our assent. Do I see myself on the altar in Christ? Is my "Amen" true? Olson/Augustine

Do I see the Lord's on-going Incarnation in everyone I meet? Olson/Augustine

Do I lessen my place in the body of Christ by falling into self-rejection or pride? Nouwen

Fr. Nouwen said that we are all broken, and that our pain and suffering touches us in our unique and most intimate individuality. Do I respect such individuality of other people? Nouwen

Do I seek to be Christ to others in a way that helps them to know that they are worthy, and that whatever they say or do, Christ in us will not reject them? Nouwen

Do I believe (maybe even subconsciously) that “I am no worse than the rest of humanity” and accept that as innocent in the eyes of God? Barthelemy.

Am I afraid to trust in my worth in God in proper circumstances (i.e., operating in prudence to discerning when to do so) by letting let people see me for who I am and accepting that sense of vulnerability? Olson

“Baptism has implanted in us the seed of the new man, ... it is important that this new man implanted in us as a seed should be still living, living for eternity [when we die]. ... we ourselves, being free, are responsible for seeing that the seed remains viable throughout life, that is to say, that our essential being passes progressively from the old man to the new; and this is not achieved by itself alone.” How am I caring for this seed of the new man? How am I progressing from the old to the new? What in particular is holding me back? Barthelemy

#### List of References:

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McCaffrey, Eugene. *Let Yourself be Loved: Elizabeth of the Trinity*  
Nouwen, Henri, J.M. *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*  
Pope Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est*  
Olson, Carl. *Called to Be the Children of God: The Catholic Theology of Human Deification*

“Thoughts Of A Crazy Woman” was a phrase that ended up in my journal one day, and eventually turned into a blog reflection on scriptures. It has developed over the years, but has, at its roots, the idea that following Christ in modern times should look crazy to those who don't. I hope my work, an effort of collaborating with the Holy Spirit, contributes to your own attempts to live your spiritual life so as to look crazy to others.

In Him,

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