

Help for Examination of Conscience

1. How do I use my feelings?
2. What motives guide me? Why did I do this and why not that?
3. What thoughts have accompanied me through the day?
4. How was my relationship with my neighbour (my words)?
5. What did my actions look like? Where did I omit the good?

1. How Do I Use My Feelings?

Feelings are valuable signals

- They show us our unfulfilled, hidden needs.
- They reveal to us the true motives of our decisions.

Feelings are not yet a sin (CCC 1771-1775)

*"The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger. In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is **neither moral good nor evil**. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them."* Thus, our attitude and conduct towards the emotions determine whether the neutral feelings lead to evil or good. So our attitude and conduct towards the emotions determine whether the neutral feelings lead to evil or good.

Suppression of unpleasant feelings

People are often taught in childhood that they should suppress unpleasant feelings. It is considered **unseemly**, and often expressed feelings are mistakenly seen as weaknesses or even sins. People are therefore afraid to express and admit their feelings: *I felt angry, wrathful, rejected, resentful, envious, jealous, in love, insecure, anxious, depressed, etc. in this or that situation.*

- **Fatal consequences of suppressing feelings:**
 - Suppressed feelings limit our freedom and we become dishonest and mendacious (we put on masks).
- We repress the so-called negative feelings into the subconscious mind; there they escape our control, rebel and demand to be discharged.
 - This can manifest itself in exhaustion, tension, insomnia, headaches and various illnesses (psychosomatic illnesses that have no biological cause).
 - They can lead to outbursts of anger and vicious words.

- They form barriers, increase conflicts among people.
- The evil spirit also likes to enter into suppressed feelings: He uses our fears and tendencies to blame other people or ourselves. What is helpful here are prayers of renunciation (*I renounce the spirit of anger, hatred, envy, impurity, sadness...*) or a blessing of deliverance from the priest.

Practical Help: Diary of Feelings

To observe the feelings and use them for good, we need silence, self-observation (daily examination of conscience in the evening): One writes down the feelings one experienced during the day: **I felt ... (name of feeling) when I ... (situation)**.

- By naming the feeling, we bring it from the subconscious into conscious mind.
- We can then ask: What is the underlying need of the feeling? What do I expect from other people? Where has something similar happened in my life?
- In this way we free ourselves from the false opinion about ourselves. We recognise the true needs, attitudes, our true image: the problems in our relationship with God and our neighbour.
 - From this I recognise whether the source of these feelings are current situations or events from childhood. (Recommendation: In case of wounds from childhood, healing prayer of the emotions).
 - They show us our bondages and dependencies (on people and things), self-centredness, the search for prestige, suggestions of the evil spirit, etc.
- We have to accept that there are disgusting, threatening or shameful feelings in us; by accepting them and giving them to Jesus, change happens in our lives: "Jesus, I give you my feelings of anger, envy, impurity, fear".
 - Fr. Buob: *Don't repress the truth! Admit: "Yes, dear God, that's how I am!" Walk the redemptive path of praise, thanksgiving, the Word of God or a prayer of blessing. It is a matter of letting yourself be redeemed from the dust, from aggression, depression, from fear and inhibition!*

2. Which Motives Drive Me?

Which motive has guided me?

Why did I do something and why not?

Meaning of life (YC 1): *"For what purpose are we here on earth? We are here on earth in order to know and to love God, to do good according to his will, and to go someday to heaven."*

Help through the signals of the feelings

By observing the feelings, we expose our true motives and reasons why I do something and why I don't. Often the motive is hidden pride and selfishness that drives our decisions rather than glorifying God or loving our neighbour. Therefore, they exhort us to repentance, to separation from bad attachments, to protection from impending danger.

3. What Thoughts Have Filled Me?

Goal: Do I think like Jesus? Am I increasingly adopting Jesus' way of thinking through the word of the Gospel? Or do I let myself be guided by negative thinking and thus "curse" myself through neg. ties?

- *Absorb the thoughts of Jesus! Read the Gospel, choose a sentence and repeat it often! It purifies our thoughts and fills us with the light and power of the Holy Spirit.*

Sad self-recognition: Thoughts often revolve around the EGO, one's own plans, desires, disappointments, etc., which later manifest themselves as sinful deeds (e.g. intemperance, impurity, greed, etc.).

Distractions in prayer reveal thoughts (CCC 2729)

"A distraction (in prayer) reveals to us what we are attached to. To become humbly aware of it before God awakens our love, which prefers nothing to Him, when we resolutely give Him our heart so that He may purify it. Here is the place of struggle and decision as to which Lord we will serve."

From thought to sin

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasises purity of heart: in thought one is to reject evil. In the 10 Commandments, the 9th and 10th Commandments refer to the sins of thought (consent to uncleanness, covetousness).

- First, the evil temptation begins with an external idea that one cannot avoid.
- Then follows the dialogue with this idea, which is not yet sin, but already robs the soul of strength, destroys inner peace and disturbs prayer.
- To keep peace, one should immediately reject the bad thought.
- Otherwise, the moment of consent occurs, which leads to passion, that is, to involvement in vice.
- Passion is the final stage in which the bad thought enters the heart of man, hardens it and keeps it in evil.

"He who does not sin in thought never sins in deed!"

4. What Do My Relationships Look Like?

Words of Jesus, *"I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."* (Mt 12:36-37)

St. Sr. Faustine, *"I trembled at the thought that I should give an account of my tongue. In the tongue there is life and also death. Many a time we kill with the tongue. These are not small things."*

In which drawer do I put the neighbour?

Do I reject my neighbour? Do I shower him with ugly swear words, perhaps even maledictions and curses? Do I spread rumours and slander? Do I kill with my words?

Listening empathetically

Do I make an effort to listen empathetically to the other person (spouse, children)? Do I put everything unnecessary aside (newspaper, TV, PC, etc.) to just be there for the other person?

Body language

Do I work on my body language by blessing and forgiving the other person? (*I bless you, dear human child, in the name of Jesus Christ!*)

5. What Do My Deeds Look Like?

Do I examine my conscience according to the **10 Commandments**? (*Help: confession manual, booklet "Lord, teach us to love!" etc.*) Do I know that esotericism is not compatible with the Christian faith (cf. YC 356)? - Do I confess sins against the 6th commandment?

"Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin!" (James 4:17) Am I remembering, in the midst all my stress, that Jesus will ask me about the works of mercy at the judgement? - Do I see the needy person on my path or do I pass him/her by?

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. Admonish the sinner (in all humility, in awareness of one's own sinfulness, in concern for his/her eternal welfare)
2. Instruct the ignorant
3. Counsel the doubtful
4. Be patient with those in error
5. Comfort the sorrowful
6. Bear wrongs patiently
7. Pray for the living and the dead