

# Penance

*Forms and Prayers for  
Self-Examination, Contrition, and  
Satisfaction and Amendment of Life*

*from  
Saint Augustine's Prayer Book  
16th Edition, 1964*

## THE THREE ELEMENTS OF REPENTANCE

The part of the person approaching this sacrament is repentance. True repentance has three elements:

1. CONTRITION or sorrow for sin. This can be obtained only at the foot of the Cross. We may not have an emotion of sorrow, but when we see what our sins have done to Jesus, we shall be sorry.
2. CONFESSION of all known sin. This involves a careful examination of our conscience. We cannot confess our sins until we see exactly how we look to the all-seeing eye of God.
3. SATISFACTION & AMENDMENT OF LIFE. We must intend to lead a new or better life. This intention is shown by our acceptance and performance of the penance imposed by the Priest in confession.

## SELF-EXAMINATION

¶ *Before self-examination, say this prayer:*

O Holy Spirit, Source of all light, Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, and of knowledge, come to my assistance and enable me to make a good confession. Enlighten me and help me now to know my sins as one day I shall be forced to recognize them before thy judgment seat. Bring to my mind the evil which I have done and the good which I have neglected. Permit me not to be blinded by self-love. Grant me, moreover, heartfelt sorrow for my transgressions, knowing how deeply they have wounded the living Heart of my Heavenly Father; and help me to make a good confession that all stain of guilt may be washed away in the Precious Blood of my Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Think of yourself as God's child, and of the wickedness of following Satan rather than your loving Father. Do not be in a hurry, and do not vex yourself because you cannot remember everything. Be honest with God and with yourself; this is all God asks of you.

Write down briefly what you remember of your sins. Don't try to depend on your memory. If there is any question you do not understand, let it alone, and go on, to the next one. Do not fret about your sins. Remember, you are trying to recall them in order that you may be forgiven, not that you may be condemned, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise."

## I. Pride

**Thou shalt have none other gods but me.**

Have you been more interested in self than in God? Have you made it your chief aim to be always on top? What have you been vain about; personal appearance, clothes, personality, possessions, your family, ability, success in games or in studies? Have you scorned other people for their misfortunes, their sins, stupidity, or other weaknesses? Scorned other people's religion? Talked too much; called attention to yourself? Been sorry for yourself, self-pitying? Refused to admit when you were in the wrong? Refused to apologize? Been resentful or suspicious of others through over-sensitiveness? Have you been stubborn and self-willed? In what ways?

## II. Idolatry

**Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.**

Have you put another person before God's law; by not going to church, or by committing some other sin to please that person? Have you wanted popularity so much that you have not said your prayers, or done some other good things, for fear of being laughed at? Have you loved money or clothes too much; or even sinned to get them? Gone to mediums, fortune-tellers or astrologers?

## III. Profanity

**Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain.**

Have you sworn? (Especially, have you misused the Holy Name of Jesus?) Have you given way to anxiety, instead of turning to God for help? Been worried, afraid, allowed yourself to

get into a panic? Allowed yourself to feel that it was impossible even for God to help you?

#### **IV. Irreverence**

**Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.**

Have you missed Mass on Sunday when you could have gone? Have you failed to say your prayers morning and night? Or to say them earnestly? Have you always kept Sunday as you think it ought to be kept? Have you done some unnecessary work on Sunday? Have you always tried hard to worship God when in church? Or have you sometimes been irreverent? Or joked about holy things? Have you ever been ashamed of your Religion: ashamed of Jesus?

#### **V. Disobedience**

**Honour thy father and thy mother.**

Have you been grateful enough for all your parents have done for you? Did you ever disobey them, or others who were over you; or did you ever obey them slowly and reluctantly? Have your actions ever caused them anxiety or shame? Have you ever deliberately disobeyed God or ignored His desires for you? In what way? Have you ever shown disregard for the laws of the Church? For the laws of the land? Have you contributed as much as you ought to the support or the happiness of your parents? What sins have you committed with regard to your wife (husband), children, or other members of your family? Have you given as much care and attention as possible to the religious life of your family; for example, regarding Grace at Meals, Family Prayers, Church going, etc.? Have you seen that your children had adequate and continuous religious instructions? Have you been just and generous to people in your employment, or under your authority in business? In what ways have you failed? Have you tried to dominate the lives of others unduly? How?

#### **VI. Hate**

**Thou shalt do no murder.**

Have you killed anyone, either in outward deed, or in your heart? Have you wished that someone was dead? Have you been angry unjustly? Struck people? Or hurt them by ridicule or contempt? Have you ever cursed people? Have you gossiped about people? Is there anyone whom you now hold a grudge against? Or are unwilling to forgive? (Think how often God has forgiven you; and ask Him to help you to forgive and love your enemies for His sake.) Have you refused to help people who were in real need of help? Ignored the sick or the poor? Not tried to be friendly with people,

especially with people who are not very popular? Have you been afraid to stand up for a person when others were mistreating him? Have you ever taught (or tempted) another person to sin?

#### **VII. Impurity**

**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

Have you been impure in thought, word, or deed? (You need not talk much about it, but make it quite plain to the Priest just what kind of sins you mean; whether they were done alone; or with a man or woman; and, if possible, how often?) Have you looked at evil pictures? Or read bad passages in books? Have you ever used the Bible in this way? Have you been immodest in actions, or in dress? Have you been lazy in prayers, work, or study? Neglected business, family, or social duties? Have you ever eaten, drunk, or smoked more than was good for you? Have you neglected the days of fasting or abstinence? Broken rules or resolutions which you have made for yourself? Allowed yourself to be over-egrossed in light reading, the movies, or other pastimes, to the exclusion of worthwhile things? Have you been cowardly in sickness or pain? Been unmindful of the suffering of the world?

#### **VIII. Theft**

**Thou shalt not steal.**

Have you ever stolen anything? What things? Have you shared in stolen goods? Have you cheated in business, games, or lessons? Have you been over-extravagant; gambled or bet too much? Tried hard to pay all your debts? Contracted debts unnecessarily? Have you remembered that God has given you all you have? Have you thanked Him enough? Have you given as much as you ought to the Church or to charities? Have you been stingy? Have you wasted time?

#### **IX. Deceit**

**Thou shalt not bear false witness.**

How many lies have you told? Have you exaggerated too much? Been deceitful, unfair, a hypocrite? Allowed others to receive blame for your faults? Been harsh toward others, or in speaking of others, for sins which you also have committed?

#### **X. Discontent**

**Thou shalt not covet.**

Have you been jealous of others, because they had more things, or more money; or because they were better looking or more successful; or because someone loves them more than you? Been grieved at the prosperity or attainments of others? Been dejected because of

the position, talents, or fortune of others? Have you been glad when they failed, or were in trouble? Glad when you heard people speak ill of them? Have you allowed yourself to be sad and discouraged at times and not always fought to be brave and joyful? Have you tried to accept loss or sorrow or had things at the Hand of God? Have you thought that God does not love you? Have you ever given up trying to be good?

***Prayer after Self-Examination***

O my God, how great are my sins! Would that I had never offended thee. If by carelessness or ignorance I have forgotten anything in my self-examination, show it to me now that I may make a good confession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**CONTRITION**

O my God, I cry unto thee with the prodigal: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But now, O God, give me true sorrow of heart for my many sins whereby I have grieved thee, and enable me to make a full confession to thy priest, that I may receive perfect remission of them, through thine infinite goodness. Amen.

O God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against thee who art so good. Forgive me for Jesus' sake, and I will try to sin no more. Amen.

O God, I love thee with my whole heart and above all things and am heartily sorry that I have offended thee. May I never offend thee any more. Oh, may I love thee without ceasing, and make it my delight to do in all things thy most holy will. Amen.