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An adult's confession booklet
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A Confession Booklet



With prayers, directions, and an
examination of conscience suitable
for adults...especially converts.

By Aloysius J. Heeg, S. J.
and
Aloysius J. Wilwerding, S. J.

A QUEEN'S WORK
PAMPHLET



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Confession
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THE QUEEN'S WORK
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THE QUEEN'S WORK

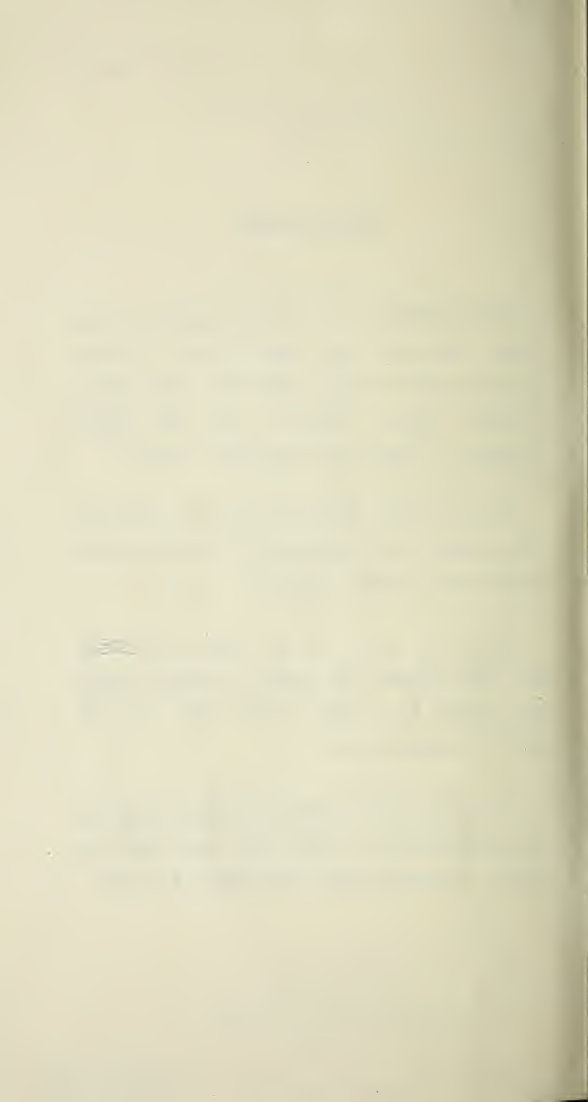
Foreword

We cannot be really happy if we have sins on our soul. That is why Jesus said to His Apostles that first Easter Day, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

It was then that Jesus gave priests the power to take away our sins and make us really happy.

Even if a sin is as big as it can be, the priest can take it away. Only we must be really sorry for it and tell it in confession.

Use this little booklet when you go to confession. It will tell you how to pray, what to do, and what to say.



A First Confession

IF YOU are a convert and want to make your first confession, follow the advice of the one who instructed you. He may have said to you: "All you need do is to think of your sins and be sorry for them. Then go into the confessional and say, 'Father, I am a convert. This is my first confession. Will you please help me?'"

The priest will be glad to help you. If you want, he will ask you the ordinary questions that will help you recall your sins, and then all you will have to do is to answer them as well as you can.

If you use this booklet, you may be able to make your confession without the priest's having to help you. In this booklet you will find a list of questions to help you think of your sins. As soon as a question makes you think of a sin that you committed, see if you can tell that sin in just a few words and say about how many times you committed it. Most sins can be told in short sentences that begin with the word "I" and end with the word "times." For example, "I told a little lie three times." Between the "I" and the "times" are put the name of the sin and the number of times you committed it.

Do not worry if you cannot remember everything. Strictly speaking, the only sins you are **obliged** to tell in confession are **mortal** sins. Although it is good to confess venial sins — and some people have only venial sins to confess — you are not obliged to confess them. Neither should you worry about the exact number of times you committed a sin. Just say “about” and state the number as well as you can. If the sin has been a sort of habit, you may give the number as about so many times a day, a week, or a month.

Likewise it is good to know that we are not obliged to confess any sin if we doubt that we really committed it. Then, too, in subsequent confessions we are not obliged to confess any sin if we doubt that we confessed it before.

When we try to make a good confession, God forgives all our sins, even those we forget to tell. If after confession we find that we forgot to tell even mortal sins, we may go to Holy Communion. All we need do is to tell those sins the next time we go to confession.

In this booklet you may learn that certain things are sins which you did not know were sins. In that case just remember that if you did those things

without knowing that they were sins, they were not sins for you. But, of course, you may not do them again.

The first confession a convert makes is always the hardest. He is making a confession of his whole past life and may not know just how to go about it. That is why it is good to say to the priest, "Father, I am a convert. This is my first confession." That will make the priest more than willing to help you. Indeed, your first confession will be the hardest. But be assured of this: It will also be the most fruitful and the most comforting.

Your second and subsequent confessions will be very easy. You may be able to make them without any help whatever. However, if you have any difficulty, just remember the expression: "Father, I am a convert. Will you please help me?"

But what about a person who is, not a convert, but a Catholic who has been away from the sacraments for many years? What can he say? He can say, "Father, I am sorry, but it is a long time since I have been to confession. Will you please help me?" And of course the priest will.

Ordinarily this booklet should give you all the help you need. The sacra-

ment of penance should be to you what Christ meant it to be: a real source of happiness, a means to repair the past, and an aid to do better in the future.

As a little child would put it: "In confession Jesus not only takes away our sins but helps us to be good."

Frequent Confession

In his encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ, Pope Pius XII says: "We wish the pious practice of frequent confession to be earnestly advocated. Not without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was this practice introduced into the Church. By it genuine self-knowledge is increased, Christian humility grows, bad habits are corrected, spiritual neglect and tepidity are countered, the conscience is purified, the will strengthened, a salutary self-control is attained and grace is increased in virtue of the sacrament itself."

From this it is evident that frequent confession is recommended, not only to **forgive** sin, but also to **prevent** sin. To profit by frequent confession it is not enough for us to be frequently telling our sins. We must also be frequently working out plans to overcome them. It would be an entirely false idea of the sacrament of penance to look upon it as a mere device for registering our sins. We must be sorry for the sins we tell, and that sorrow must be accompanied by a sincere, practical resolution to avoid those sins in the future.

Of course, when we go to confession often, we do not always have to

use an examination of conscience as long as the one in this booklet. To recall any sins committed since our last confession, we may simply ask ourselves the following questions:

Did I do anything wrong:

by thinking or desiring (mind)?

by hearing (ears)?

by seeing or reading (eyes)?

by saying or eating or drinking (mouth)?

by doing or not doing (hands)?

by going or not going (feet)?

These simple questions can be recalled by remembering the six words: mind, ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. They are the words suggested by the definition of sin as found in the catechism: "Sin is any willful thought, desire, word, action, or omission forbidden by the law of God."

Every sin is an offense against God. How grateful, then, we should be that Christ gave us the sacrament of penance. It is a God-given means, not only to forgive sin, but also to prevent sin.

A Few Good Points to Remember

Every sin has a NAME.

Be sure to tell the NAME of the sin, and, if mortal, HOW MANY TIMES you committed it.

Most sins can be told in short sentences that begin with the word "I" and end with the word "TIMES." Like this: "I ----- TIMES."

IMPORTANT

A sin is MORTAL if all of the following three conditions are present. If **any one** of the three is missing, then it is no MORTAL SIN.

1. It must be a BIG SIN (something seriously wrong).
2. We must KNOW that it is a big sin (sufficiently reflect that it is something seriously wrong).
3. We must REALLY WISH to commit the BIG SIN (fully consent to what is seriously wrong). (If we are forced to steal, for example, or to eat meat on Fridays, or if we are violently dragged into impurities, there is no sin.)

Prayer Before Confession

Dear Jesus, I have sinned. But now I am sorry. I want to go to confession. I know that if I make a good confession, you will take away my sins and help me to lead a better life.

Jesus, please help me to make a good confession. Mary, my dear Mother, help me to make my soul pure and beautiful like yours. My Guardian Angel, pray for me.

Prayer to the Holy Ghost

Come, O Holy Ghost, help me:

to know all my sins,

to be heartily sorry for them,

to resolve firmly to commit them no more,

to confess them properly, and

to accept the penance the priest gives me.

An Examination of Conscience

Here are some questions to help me think of my sins. When I find a sin that I committed, I see if I can tell it in just a few words and say about how many times I committed it.

In this examination of conscience:

Venial sins are shown in small italic letters, like these: *venial*.

Venial sins that may become mortal sins are shown in small black letters like these: **venial or mortal**.

Mortal sins are shown in large letters like these: **MORTAL**.

First Commandment

Did I neglect prayer *for a long time* through laziness?

Was I *willfully distracted* during prayer?

Did I, when a Catholic, **DENY** that I was a Catholic?

Did I, when a Catholic, **TAKE PART IN NON-CATHOLIC SERVICES OR NON-CATHOLIC SUNDAY SCHOOL?**

Did I **go** to a fortuneteller or **BELIEVE** in him (or her)?

Second Commandment

Did I curse?

Did I anger others to make them curse?

Did I use *God's name in an improper manner?*

Third Commandment

Did I MISS MASS ON SUNDAYS OR HOLYDAYS THROUGH MY OWN FAULT?

Did I come late to Mass through my own fault? How late?

Did I *misbehave in church?*

Did I work on Sundays for a LONG TIME without necessity?

Fourth Commandment

Was I mean to my parents?

Was I mean to my children?

Did I neglect my parents in their need? Slightly or SERIOUSLY?

Did I neglect my duties to my children? Slightly or SERIOUSLY?

Did I *make fun of old people?*

Did I disobey my legitimate superiors?

Did I fail in my obligations as a citizen?

Fifth Commandment

Was I *angry? Stubborn?*

Was I *unkind* or **mean** to others?

Did I *look down on others* (pride)?

Did I **wish evil** to others?

Did I **hate** others?

Did I try to “**get even**” with others
(revenge)?

Did I **fight** or **quarrel**?

Did I **make others fight**?

Did I **lead others to sin** by my bad
example?

Did I **get drunk**?

Did I **KILL OR TRY TO KILL SOME-**
ONE?

Did I **TRY TO KILL MYSELF**?

Did I **do any reckless driving**?

Sixth and Ninth Commandments

DID I WILLINGLY TAKE PLEAS-
URE IN USING IMPURE
WORDS?

DID I WILLINGLY TELL IMPURE
STORIES AND TAKE PLEAS-
URE IN THEM?

DID I TAKE PLEASURE IN LIST-
ENING TO IMPURE TALK?

DID I TAKE PLEASURE IN SING-
ING IMPURE SONGS?

DID I REALLY WANT TO LOOK
AT IMPURE THINGS OR PIC-
TURES?

DID I WANT IMPURE THOUGHTS,
AND DID I TAKE PLEASURE
IN THEM?

DID I TEACH OTHERS TO COMMIT
IMPURE SINS?

DID I TAKE PLEASURE IN
TOUCHING MYSELF OR
OTHERS IN AN IMPURE MAN-
NER, OR LET OTHERS DO SO
TO ME?

DID I COMMIT AN IMPURE ACT?
DID I ABUSE MY MARRIAGE
RIGHTS?

WAS I UNFAITHFUL TO MY
SPOUSE?

Did I go to bad places (places that
lead me to sin)?

Did I go to bad movies?

Did I read bad books or magazines?

Did I go with bad companions?

Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Was I *jealous or envious*?

Did I wish to get in a wrongful way
what belonged to another?

Did I cheat?

Did I steal anything? How much?
What was it?

- Did I help others to steal?
 Did I tell another to steal?
 Did I accept or offer bribes?
 Did I take or keep stolen goods given
 to me by others?
 Did I spoil another's property?
 Did I fail to return valuable articles
 when found?
 Did I neglect to do the work for which
 I was paid?
 DID I NEGLECT TO PAY A LABOR-
 ER A LIVING WAGE?

Eighth Commandment

- Did I *say mean things about others in
 their absence* (backbiting)?
 Did I *tell lies*?
 Did these lies injure others (calum-
 ny)?
 Did I talk about the sins of another
 without necessity (detraction)?

Church Commandments

- DID I EAT MEAT ON FRIDAYS OR
 ON OTHER FORBIDDEN
 DAYS? (It is not a sin if we for-
 get that it is a forbidden day.)
 DID I FAST AS REQUIRED ON THE
 DAYS APPOINTED? (If in
 doubt, consult your confessor.)

WHEN IN MORTAL SIN, DID I
FAIL TO GO TO CONFESSION
AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR?

DID I FAIL TO RECEIVE HOLY
COMMUNION DURING THE
EASTER TIME?

DID I MAKE A BAD CONFESSION
(deliberately conceal a mortal sin
from the priest)? (It is not a sin
if we just forget it.)

DID I RECEIVE HOLY COMMUN-
ION WITHOUT FASTING? (Of
course, it is not a sin if condi-
tions are such that your confes-
sor says you may receive with-
out fasting.)

DID I RECEIVE HOLY COMMUN-
ION IN MORTAL SIN?

Did I fail to contribute my proper
share to the support of the
Church?

DID I (when a Catholic) GET MAR-
RIED BY SOMEONE NOT A
PRIEST?

DID I GET A CIVIL DIVORCE
WITHOUT MY BISHOP'S PER-
MISSION?

DID I MARRY A DIVORCED PER-
SON?

DID I JOIN SECRET SOCIETIES
(Freemasons, etc.)?

Now Ask Yourself

Is there anything else that I did that
was a sin?

Is there anything that worries me?

Is there anything I should ask the
priest about?

Do I really mean to keep from sin?

Have I a plan for avoiding sin in the
future — especially the biggest
sin in this confession?

To Make a Good Act of Contrition

Dear Jesus, I know that one mortal sin is enough to keep my soul from heaven; one mortal sin is enough to send my soul to hell; and one sin, mortal or venial, offends you, who died for me on the cross.

Dear Jesus, I now seem to see you hanging on the cross. I know my sins have put you there. I am really sorry and do not want to sin again. Please listen to me as I slowly say my act of contrition.

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins, because of thy punishments, but most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

The Things to Say in the Confessional

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (1) _____ since my last confession. I (2) _____ times. I am sorry for these and for all the sins of my past life, especially for (3) _____. O my God, I am heartily sorry for (4) _____ Thank you, Father. (5)

- (1) There I say how long it has been since my last confession; like this: "one week."
- (2) There I tell my sins and how many times I committed them.
- (3) There I name a past sin for which I am very sorry; like this: "stealing."
- (4) I say the whole act of contrition after the priest tells me my penance.
- (5) I say, "Thank you, Father," just before I leave.

Prayers After Confession

Dear Jesus, I want to do something to make up for my sins. Please help me to say my penance well. I am going to say it right away. (1) _____.

I thank you, Jesus, for having taken away my sins. Dear Holy Ghost, dear Mother of God, dear Guardian Angel, I thank you all for helping me to make a good confession. I want to do what is right from now on. Please help me.

Help me to keep from all sin, but especially from (2) _____. That is the sin I am going to try most of all not to commit again. To keep from committing that sin again I will (3) _____.

You see, dear Jesus, I really thank you for forgiving my sins, and I do not want to commit them again.

(1) There I say the penance the priest gave me.

(2) There I think of my worst sin.

(3) There I say what I will do to keep from committing that sin again.

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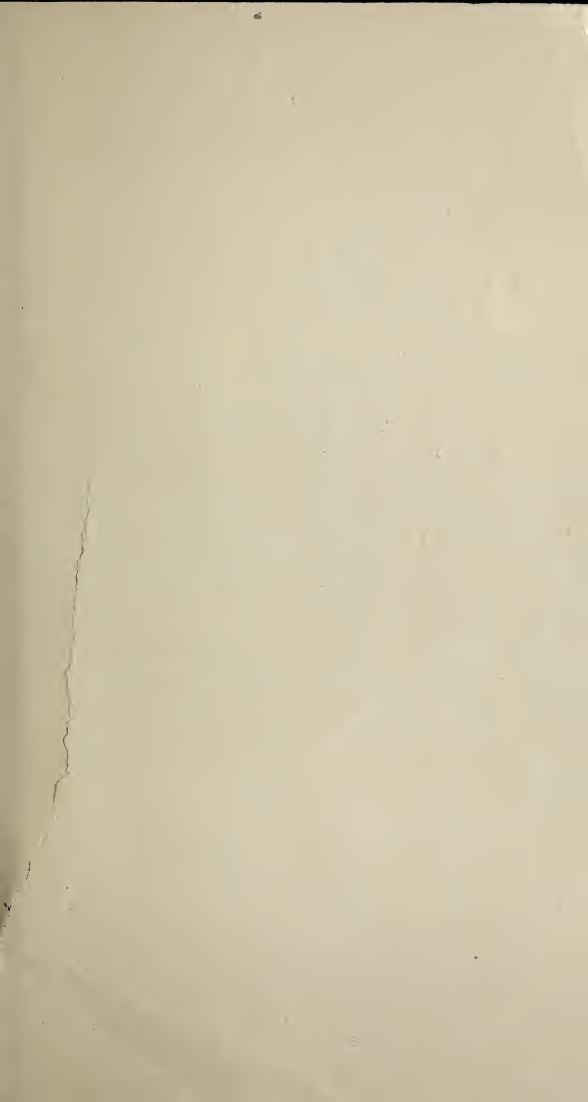
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