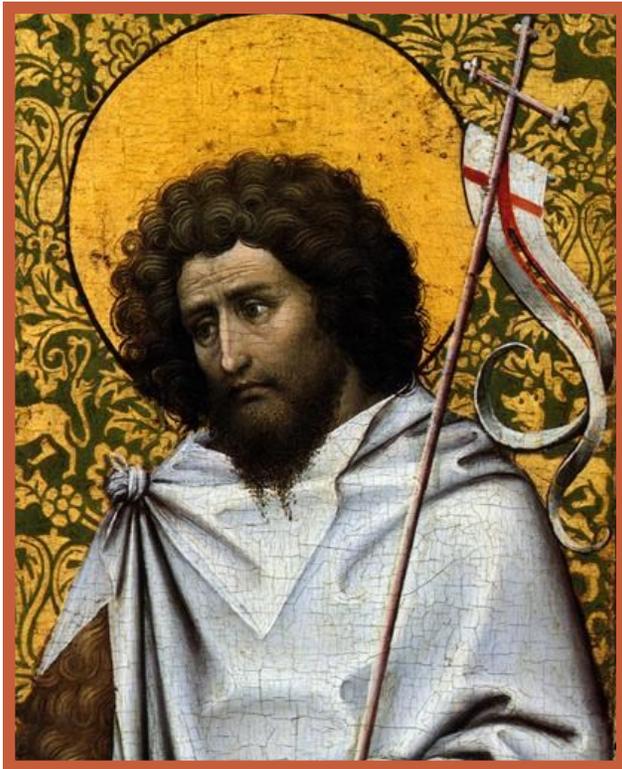


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J.M.J.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE: A CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

—Fr. Rene Schatteman



*And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*

—Mark 1:5

1. It is important for us to know ourselves. In this way we get to know God who has created us with such fatherly delight. St. Augustine tells us: *noverim me, noverim te*, may I know myself so that I may know you, Lord. And St. John Paul II wrote: "God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth -in a word, to know himself- so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves." (Encyclical *Faith and Reason*, Introduction)

2. It is not easy to know oneself but we should make that effort. Spiritual authors suggest we spend a few minutes each day thinking about where we stand in the eyes of God. In fact, St. Paul tells us: "whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall." (1 Cor. 10:12) And Our Lord himself at one point says "I do not know where you are from" when people asked him: "Lord, open the door for us." (Lk. 13:25)

3. Just as we might ask our parents or a teacher or coach: how am I doing? We should also ask Our Lord: are you pleased with me? What should I be trying to do better? Where could I improve? The Lord is

very anxious to help us move forward. He wants us to follow him, to grow in the virtues, to become a better son/daughter of God, to show him our love in deeds.

4. So it is good to take two to three minutes, usually at the end of the day, to sit or kneel quietly and think back over our day. (The specific points we consider will depend very much on the age and place in life of the individual person. Here is where each person must reflect on his/her own responsibility. But here are some broad suggestions.)

A. What have I done well today? I need to realize that I have been able to do some/many good things today because God has been in my soul, reminding me to...

-faithfully fulfill my duties; get my work done

-obey my parents and lawful superiors

-be nice to others

-think no evil, speak no evil, do no evil

-not judge others; not look down on others

B. Where and how did I fail Our Lord today?

-have I neglected prayer?

-have I been lazy about fulfilling my duties?

-have I been inconsiderate of members of my family and my friends?

-have I given in to sinful thoughts or desires?

-have I broken other Commandments?

C. What could I do better tomorrow? What should I try to do better tomorrow?

**It is good to formulate at least one small resolution for the next day, for example: I will try to...**

-pray with greater attention

-think more often about the fact that I am a child of God

-call upon Jesus, my Lord and my God, my great Friend

-think more often that he is with me

-do my work on time, without delays and without complaining about it

-be more cheerful, always with a smile

-say yes to everyone who rightly asks me for a favor

**5. Summary:** as we begin a new month, I resolve to make the effort to make a brief examination of conscience each night. In that way I hope to get to know better my good

qualities and my failings. In this way too, I hope to come to appreciate the gifts God is giving me so that I might thank him for them and truly make better use of them. I will

-call upon the Holy Spirit to give me the light I need to carry out this work: Come, Holy Spirit, for without your help I will never know myself.

-foster a great and noble ambition to accomplish a lot today: tasks well done, out of love.

-be prepared to meet the Cross as we encounter delays, obstacles, problems, difficulties.

-abandon all our concerns in the loving hands of our Father God.

-invoke our Guardian Angel, asking for light and strength to say no to evil and to do good.

-ask our Blessed Mother Mary to keep us focused on our true purpose in life: to be holy as God wants.

### **5. Briefly reflect back on the examination of conscience of the previous night.**

Consider the resolution you made then for today and renew it at the start of this new day.

Resolve to avoid the pitfalls of yesterday. Foster the desire to make this the best day of your life.

### **6. Live the “heroic minute”: “It’s time to get up, on the dot!”**

Without hesitation, a supernatural thought and... up! The heroic minute; here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does not weaken your body.” (St. Josemaria: *The Way*, n. 206)

To get up is not easy but don’t let yourself be defeated in the first battle of the day (cf. *The Way*, n. 191). Don’t touch the snooze button.

Make the Morning Offering on your knees, if possible. Then get going! Let’s roll!

As you get ready: repeat your Offering and focus your thoughts on worthwhile considerations (Cfr. nn. 3 and 4)

Show with your works that you really do want to do all things for the love of God.

Remember: God is counting on you. God is waiting for you. God is with you.

At times during the day, renew your Morning Offering, if not with the same words, at least with the same sentiments, the same desire to do what you ought to give glory to God.

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