

## A Personal Examination

**A**dvent is a season of preparation; as we look forward to celebrating once again the Birth of Our Lord, Advent reminds us that not only will Christ return, but that we must be ready for Him, ready at all times - we don't know the time or the hour. We cannot just sit back and watch the events of the Incarnation as spectators; as Christians we are called, and commanded, to be active participants within it.

Advent is a time to stop and reflect; a time to look at ourselves and see how we are doing in our journey with God, and whether we ought to act to do more. A starting point for this is an Act of Self-Examination, honestly looking at our lives and seeing what needs to change.

This is not a stick to be beat ourselves with; it is not designed to burden us with guilt. Jesus came to free us from sin, not to burden us with guilt. We need not fear our own failure, because God accepts us even in failure. But like in so many other aspects of our life, we must face up to the truth about ourselves, both good and bad, in order to move forward. Treat this as a positive exercise, which will give you a new impetus and a new commitment in your Journey with God.

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Find a quiet place, and a quiet time, and try to feel yourself in the presence of God; not standing before Him in fear but in love.

Pray to the Holy Spirit, the guide of our Conscience:

***Jesus said: "If you love me, you will obey my commandments. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God." (John 14:15-17)***

***Holy Spirit, help me now to know the truth about myself. Stir up my conscience and memory that I may perceive how I have failed. Show me my sins against God and my sins against others, the evil I have done and the good I have not done, so that I may truly repent and determine to do better and overcome my faults, with your help; for Jesus' sake.***

The following questions may help in your Self-Examination:

### My Spiritual Life and Discipline

- *Am I regular in my daily prayer, or am I careless?*

- *Is time with God the first of my priorities, or do I let other things push Him out?*
- *Am I faithful in reading and studying the Bible?*
- *Do I make time for worship on Sundays, or do I just fit it in when I can?*
- *Do I prepare myself to receive Holy Communion?*
- *Do I spend time each day examining myself, and confessing my sins?*
- *Do I leave God out of any part of my life?*
- *Do I take the Ten Commandments seriously, or do I treat them as mere suggestions to be followed when I want?*
- *Do I give adequately to support the work of God and His Church?*

### Family Life

- *Have I shown respect and love to those in my family?*
- *Do I make God a central member of my family?*
- *Do I share my faith with my children, teaching them to pray and read the Bible?*
- *Have I been true to my marriage vows?*

### Work

- *Am I honest in all that I do at work?*
- *Do I treat my employees with the love and respect God wants?*
- *Do I work to the utmost of my ability, doing that which I am paid for?*
- *Do I allow God to influence the decisions I make at work?*
- *Am I willing to let others at work know of my faith?*
- *Do I allow work to be more important than my time with God, or my time with my family?*
- *Do I take adequate time off to be refreshed?*

### Relations with Others

- *Am I willing to forgive those who hurt me?*
- *Am I willing to ask for forgiveness from those I hurt?*
- *Do I get angry easily?*
- *Do I gossip?*
- *Do I try to hurt the reputation of others?*
- *Am I willing to help others in need?*
- *Do I look for Christ in everyone I meet?*
- *Am I willing to lead others into the Faith?*
- *Am I willing to follow others even into what I know to be wrong?*

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These are just a few suggested questions: answer them with honesty, before God, and ask for forgiveness. If you would like to, ask a priest about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Now use what you have learnt not to feel guilty, but as a way to begin a new life.

***Jesus said: "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light." (Matthew 12:28-30).***

***"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour. (John 3:16-17)***