

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

PENANCE

Acts Offered to Reunite Us with Our Loving Father

God created humanity in God's own image and likeness, and while humanity has fallen into sin, the Sacrament of Penance is one way in which we are able to rediscover the identity that God has bestowed on us.

This means that no matter how great our sin, we can always ask God to forgive us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It's in Reconciliation that we are able to humbly admit our failings to another. The priest—"in persona Christi"—hears our sins, recites the comforting words of absolution, and offers an opportunity to do better with the outpouring of grace from the sacrament. In other words, despite our mistakes God will always offer us His forgiveness if we only ask! One way that we grow is through acts of penance offered when we have made a mistake. These acts aren't to serve as punishment for our behavior, but rather, to help us seek God more fully through prayer, fasting, and acts of love so that we don't fail again. Our external works of penance reflect an inner conversion of the heart—a willingness to repent from our old ways to better follow Jesus. Our acts of penance, whether it's abstaining from meat on Friday or reciting ten Our Fathers after confession, are always aimed at helping us to be better disciples.

A disciple is aware of his or her shortcomings, but knowing that God's forgiveness is infinitely greater than our shortcomings, rejoices in the opportunity to be forgiven and start again. That's why the Sacrament of Reconciliation and offering acts of penance are necessary aspects of the life of a disciple.



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE—BASED ON THE BEATITUDES

1. **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Do I live a spirit of detachment and generosity? Do I sacrifice for others?
2. **Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.** Do I console and help those who mourn and suffer? Do I show compassion?
3. **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.** Am I authentically humble and self-giving? Have I been egotistical or boastful?
4. **Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness, for they will be satisfied.** Am I passionate for the things of God? Do I work for the triumph of love, peace, and justice?
5. **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** Am I forgiving and merciful? Do I give others the benefit of the doubt? Am I harsh or judgmental?
6. **Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.** Am I single-minded in the practice of my faith? Have I allowed a particular sin or vice to distract me from God?
7. **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.** Am I a person of reconciliation, peace, and mercy? Do I hold grudges or seek revenge?
8. **Blessed are they who are persecuted, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Do I suffer well? Am I willing to sacrifice anything for my faith? Do I allow human respect to keep me from being a Christian witness?

Taken from goodconfession.com/examination-of-conscience