

PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION

The sacrament of reconciliation offers each of us the opportunity to take stock of our lives, admit our sins, celebrate forgiveness and come home again to God's unconditional love and grace.

This is an outline of the Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (its official name):

- Gathering song, welcome and prayer by the presiding priest
- Scripture reading
- Examination of conscience and act of contrition. Then people proceed to the confessors for individual confession and absolution.
- **What to say?:** *It can be, "Bless me Father I have sinned, it has been a year (two or three) since my last confession". Or it can be your own words: "It's been a long time since I have done this and I am a little nervous, but I am sorry for what I do wrong and I ask God's help". Use the Scripture and the examination of conscience, to help decide how to name the actions, thoughts, patterns that are sinful and stop you from loving God, self and others.*
- Final prayer, song and blessing

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

- ◆ Do I talk to God daily in prayer, look for the presence of God in each day and worship with my community of faith?
- ◆ Do I love myself; value my own efforts, believe in my own God-given goodness, take care of my health? Do I understand that my body is a gift from God, to be honored, not exploited or used? Do I use alcohol and nicotine to the detriment of my body?
- ◆ Does insecurity, fear, self-absorption, prejudice stop me from being a loving person? Do I measure up to Jesus' command to 'love one another as I have loved you'? Do I judge others who think differently than I do? With whom do I struggle and why?
- ◆ Does busyness feed my need to be important or ignore the grace of solitude?
- ◆ Have I forgiven those who have hurt me or do I brood and hold on to grievances?
- ◆ Do I think about myself so much that I don't recognize the needs of others?
- ◆ Do I want material things more and more, or worry needlessly, forgetting that God is really in charge? Do I compare myself to others rather than see myself as God sees me?
- ◆ Am I aware that I have a responsibility to insure dignity and well being for all God's creation--the earth and its people, especially the poor and the vulnerable?

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(Prepared by our Confirmation Candidates)

- ◆ What do I feel guilty about? When do I second-guess my decisions?
- ◆ What have I done that would embarrass or hurt my parents?
- ◆ Would I do what I am doing to those I love the most or to myself?
- ◆ Do I take people--their gifts, goodness and love for me--for granted?
- ◆ Why do I continue to do what I do when I know that it is wrong?
- ◆ Am I honest with myself? Do I find myself rationalizing my behavior?

In the children's story, Runaway Bunny, the little bunny repeatedly runs away from his mother's love, yet, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of her bunny. Thus does God love us. The sacrament of reconciliation offers each of us the opportunity to take stock of our lives, admit our failures, celebrate forgiveness and come home again to God's unconditional love, God's grace,