

Examination of conscience as preparation for receiving confession
by Fr. Alexander Men

1. What was my general emotional state? Was it light, dark, changing, what condition prevailed? Have any new reasons appeared which can explain this emotional state? Or is it not possible to identify the reasons: why not? Was there a feeling of strange tribulation, of inexplicable unrest, of nagging uncertainty, a feeling of weakness and ebbing of strength, somehow connected with faith and with prayer.
1. What was dominant: the feeling that certain losses took place, or a feeling of something gained? Was there a feeling of serious misfortune in life or of good fortune? If something of this kind occurred, let us put the question before us: what do we consider (in the depth of our soul) as fortune and misfortune, is it possible to deduce a personal lesson from one or the other in connection with our faith? Does our personal faith find confirmation in such events?
2. Has it happened to you that you have had to review your life in the following way: is it a life filled with joy, happiness, and deep satisfaction? Should these feelings, in fact, exist, is it worth spending energy to acquire them? Why? Isn't life limited by the division of "I would like" and "but I shouldn't" or "I ought to"? If so, why do we so easily give in to surrounding necessities of life in the face of our right to have joy and happiness, a right to certain "delight" in life?
3. In what circumstances was it most difficult for us to be honest and open in our thoughts and emotions, in our feelings? Did this have some relationship to an external ideological need or to the witness of our faith or to something else? Do you find it difficult to be yourself in "usual" circumstances, when there is no demand or choice in fundamental life questions? At this moment what is it that "draws" you most, and what is it that attracted you before? Why?
4. Have you developed an inner feeling of freedom with regard to the circumstances of life? Have you succeeded in being less oppressed by them, or have you not? Why? Have faith and prayer been helpful here? Or where there other supports?
5. If the situation of life, a problem, a person, a group or an organization are troubling you — constricting you, making demands — how are you inclined to react, to accept, to enter the struggle? Do you become angry, fall into despair, into hatred or to submission? Why? Does such a reaction bear any relation to your faith? Is it related to your hope in God, to a feeling of your own dignity? Do you find in your life a desire for struggle and courage?
6. When your time is your own, what do you tend to do: a) to further your isolation or to end it? b) to let your thoughts drift to practical concerns, to focusing on your emotional wolves, thinking about the past or concerns for the future? Why? In the course of such thoughts, do you find peace, turmoil, sadness, inspiration? Why? In such circumstances do you consider the conditions and goals of your life in the context of your faith? Do you find yourself drawn to prayer? Why do you have to force yourself to do these things?
7. Do you have a close friend in life? Why has such a friendship become possible or why is it not occurring? If not, does some collective group replace such friendship? Or is there another reason?

8. Describe yourself as you would like to be seen, and your friends, as you would like to see them? Why? Now describe another image — how you actually see yourself, life, friends. Where is the discrepancy? Why? Should this discrepancy be abolished? Why? In what ways?
9. Are there frequently events in your life which you wish to begin or which you succeeded in beginning with prayer? Why?
10. Is your basic vocation clear to you? If someone were to ask you, how would you describe it? Are you successful in realizing it? What gets in the way? If Christ were to suddenly ask you, what you consider the fundamental purpose and fruit of your life, what would you say?
11. Have you succeeded in doing things in life out of love, without any other conditions? If yes or no, why? What lessons have you learned through your success or failure in this work of love? With meaning has this had?
12. Have you had to forgive anyone in something serious? Is there someone or something that you are unable to forgive? Why?
13. When you succeed in formulating a sincere and serious answer to all the questions, then try to answer the following questions: Do you sense in your life a clear presence of God, his personal participation in your activities and destiny? Do you thirst for his attention and love for you or “in humility” do you expect little? Have you experienced in your life a call from God directed directly to you? How was it recognizable? Did you sense the presence of the Holy Spirit during that time? Was there readiness and desire to furnish an answer? What actions were you able to take during that time? Are you able to say that listening to Christ and the Spirit, you were able to occasionally or at least once overcome your own resistance, the resistance of your surroundings to love, towards your vocation, towards holiness, towards God?