

# CREATE

a clean heart in me, O GOD.

## *Examining the Conscience*

- 1. In any examination of conscience, we begin in prayer since it is before God himself that we are exposed for review. It is his tribunal of love in which we are judged and his judgment is always medicinal and loving; even when he reveals our sins to us, he does not belittle. And so we may make a prayer to the Holy Spirit to enlighten our awareness of our spiritual lives. We may ask God for the strength to confess those sins which are particularly ugly or embarrassing either by the nature of the sin or by the frequency of having committed it.*
- 2. And then we begin the examination. We start with a standard of God's law and consider the degree to which we have lived up to that standard. We consider the Ten Commandments, for example, or the Beatitudes, and then review the period of time since our last confession to think of the times when we have sinned. Now, obviously, the longer it has been since our previous confession, the more difficult it will be to pinpoint the ailment and the more vague our confession will be. If that's the case, don't worry... still come to confession and include in your confession a failure on your part to maintain vigilance against sin. Better to confess that than to allow an inability to be specific to keep you from confession at all.*
- 3. Try to reach clarity about your sins and about those interior attitudes and dispositions which set us up to sin. Consider imprudent habits, which may not be sinful themselves, but which regularly lead us into occasions of sin. Follow a guide like the Ten Commandments not simply as a checklist... use the commandments of God as a springboard to consider ancillary moral questions. Bring into your reflection the fruit of spiritual reading or a homily you've heard or a holy thought introduced from any source.*
- 4. Make a firm purpose of contrition and amendment. When you have discovered your sins, despise them as God despises them. Formulate the resolution to confess them to a priest and to receive sacramental absolution.*
- 5. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having brought you to this awareness of your sins in light of his love.*
- 6. Then, confess your sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Faithfully and promptly fulfill the penance he assigns you.*