

Examination of Conscience
The Five Wounds of Secularization
Office of New Evangelization, Diocese of Salina

First Wound: Busy-ness

God's word says:

John the Baptist said, "I am not the messiah" (Jn 1:20) Peter said (to Jesus): "You are the Messiah." (Mt 16:16) "Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted and wait for the Lord." (Ps 27:14)

The secular world wants me to say:

"If I can just accomplish a few more things or attend a few more events then I will be able to 'fix' situations and people and be myself a better person." Activities that do not have a measurable (if not monetary) worth, such as prayer, contemplation, quiet time spent with loved ones, etc., have no value. I am the messiah. Everything depends on me and what I can do.

Life application questions:

- By keeping myself busy (for example, at work or on the computer), do I avoid taking an honest look at myself or having difficult conversations with others?
- Have I neglected my relationships with others and giving time to my family by spending too much time at work? Do I only give the time that is left over to my family, my friends, my God after my work?
- Am I a perfectionist?
- In all the ways that I try to be responsible and to "fix" or "figure out" things, other people, and/or myself, do I remember to also commend them to the Lord?
- Am I always taking care of other people without allowing them to help me?
- In time of physical frailty (such as sickness or advancing age), do I bemoan the fact that I can't do as much or "get around like I used to?"
- Do I take great pride in multi-tasking, even when one of the "tasks" involves a human being?

Second Wound: Consumerism/Materialism

God's word says:

"Store up treasures in heaven." (Mtt 6:20) "You cannot serve God and mammon." (Mtt 6:24) "Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God... Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." (Lk 12: 6-7)

The secular world wants me to say:

"My self-worth is determined by how much I own or how much I can buy." Love, given or received, is measured by material standards.

Life application questions:

- At Christmas time, birthdays, or other special occasions, do I sometimes measure my love for others by the monetary value of the gifts that I buy them? Do I compare the monetary values of previous gifts to ensure this gift is adequate? Do I measure the gifts given by others to me in the same way?
- As a family member (for example, a grandparent), do I compare the monetary value of gifts that I gave with those given by other family members (for example, other grandparents)?* Is my motto, "Shop til you drop?"
- Do I ever confuse buying things with loving people?
- Do I measure my value by how much I am paid or how much I can buy?
- Are there times that I choose to buy an item for a loved one when they more need something I can give them?

Third Wound: Violence/Revenge

God's word says:

“God is the judge.” (Ps 75:8) “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven you.” (Mtt 4:32) “All who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (Mtt 26:52)

The secular world wants me to say:

“We are entitled to force others to comply with our wishes. We can judge others and are responsible to administer the punishment they deserve. Punishment will resolve all problems.” In such a milieu there is no place for sacrifice, forgiveness, or true reconciliation.

Life application questions:

- Do I reject whatever harms or destroys other human beings and whatever threatens their dignity as sons and daughters of God? Do I indulge in gossip and the self-righteousness it reflects?
- Do I avoid pornographic books and movies, tv shows and internet video?
- Do I treat service sector personnel (such as waitpersons, cleaning staff, cashiers) in a respectful way?
- Do I manipulate others by using the “silent treatment” as a method of communication?
- Do I succumb to “road rage” or “supermarket rage?”
- Do I hold on to grudges and refuse to forgive?
- Have I been guilty of refusing to testify to the innocence of another because of selfishness or fear?

Fourth Wound: Individualism/Relativism

God’s word says:

“The Lord made us; we belong to Him.” (Ps 100:3) “Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the life, and truth. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (Jn 14:6) “Upon this Rock I will build my church, and gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Mtt 16:18) “For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord.” (Rom 14:8)

The secular culture wants me to say:

“Any opinion about important things is equally true; I am ultimately alone in seeking what really matters; I am all I can depend on.” There is no objective, given truth. I become the source of all truth and morality for myself. We set ourselves up as false gods.

This wound may appear as a kind of arrogance: “I know best. I can decide for myself, thank you.”

Life application questions:

- Do I stand up for what the Church teaches or at least remain open to it?
- Do I take advantage of opportunities to learn more about God’s guidance? Do I seek to understand the Church’s teachings and Sacred Scripture through reading and the internet?
- Do I know the difference between lust (making my sexual satisfaction primary) and love (giving of, even losing myself for the sake of the beloved and being open to new life)?
- Have I chosen to keep myself ignorant of world events and the needs of others outside my community because I think it doesn’t involve me?

Other times this wound may appear as a kind of loneliness and despair: “There are some things that really wear me down. Sometimes I just don’t know where to turn.”

Life application questions:

- Do I angrily ever think that no one has ever “tried as hard” or “hurt as much” as I have? Have I been bitter about painful things in my life?
- Do I cling to resentment, pain, or guilt in the death of a loved one?
- Can God’s forgiveness have more power than my mistakes? Is God’s power of mercy great enough that I can be honest about my failings and seek forgiveness, especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Fifth Wound: Entitlement

God's word says:

"What do you possess that you have not received?" (1 Cor 4:7) "In all circumstances give thanks." (1 Thes 5:18) "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Lk 9:23)

The secular world wants me to say:

"There is no need to give thanks to God since I already deserve all the good that has come to me." Disappointment, suffering, sacrifice, loss, etc. can have no meaning in such an outlook.

Life application questions:

- Have I remembered to thank God for the great love that He has for me? Do I pray at mealtime and bedtime? Do I go to Mass every Sunday and holyday?
- Am I respectful of the Lord's name?
- Have I not been willing to share with others from the abundance that God has given to me? How am I stingy with acts of love, with my possessions, my attention, my compliments?
- Do I believe that God loves me so much that I have been given all that I will ever need? Or do I complain that I don't have as much as other people? Do I whine when I don't get what I want?
- Do I indulge my self-pity through the envy and jealousy of what other people have, all the while ignoring the good things I have, what I have been given, and the goodness in myself?
- Do I overspend on impulse because I think I deserve "some small pleasures in life?"
- Do I use natural resources as if there will always be more? Do I recycle? Do I strive to conserve water, food, electricity, paper?