

Examination of Conscience

Prayer before making an examination of one's conscience

I am perfectly sensible, O my God, that I have in many ways offended your divine majesty, and provoked your just wrath by my sins; and that if I do not obtain pardon I shall be cast out of your sight forever. I desire, therefore, at present to call myself to an account, and look into all the sins whereby I have displeased you; but O my God, how miserably shall I deceive myself if you do not assist me in this work by your heavenly light. Grant me, therefore, at present, your grace, whereby I may discover all my imperfections, see all my failings, and duly call to mind all my sins: for I know that nothing is hidden from your sight. But I confess myself in the dark as to my own failings: my passions blind me, self-love flatters me, presumption deludes me, and though I have many sins which stare me in the face, and cannot be hidden, yet how many, too, are there quite concealed from me! But discover even those to me, O Lord! Enlighten my darkness, cure my blindness, and remove every veil that hides my sins from me, that my true self may be no longer remain a secret to me, nor that I may remain a stranger to my own failings, nor ever flatter myself with the thought of having repented and at the same time nourish folly and vice within my soul. Come, Holy Spirit, and by a beam of your divine light illumine my understanding, that I may have a perfect view of all my sins and iniquities, and that, sincerely repenting of them, I may be again received into your favor and regain an intimate union with you.

Preliminary

- ❖ Besides telling the **nature** of our sins, we must also remember, as far as possible, the **number** of times we have committed them, telling also and only those **circumstances**, which at times may either make a venial sin mortal or a mortal sin notably worse.

The First Three Commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

The First Commandment • “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only you shall serve.”

1. Do I think seldom of God?
2. Am I ashamed to speak of God or pray to God in public?
3. Do I neglect to thank God regularly for the gifts and blessings he has given me?
4. Do I prefer the love of other people and things more than the love of God?
5. Have I sinned while at the same time presumed that God will forgive me anyway?
6. Have I willfully doubted or denied any of the teachings of the Church (heresy)? By doing so, I have sinned against faith, against the God who reveals out of love.
7. Am I a member of any anti-Catholic or any secret society (e.g., freemasonry)?
8. Have I practiced any superstitions (charms, horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc.)?
9. Do I pray regularly and give God the worship and adoration in my life that he deserves?
10. Have I promoted worship of the body by idolizing physical perfection?

The Second Commandment • “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”

1. Have I used God's name in vain by way of profanity?
2. Have I failed to reprehend others for doing so when I could have and should have?
3. Have I murmured or complained against God (blasphemy)?
4. Have I maligned priests, others consecrated to God, the saints, or holy things?
5. Have I sworn by God's name (swearing an oath) either falsely or rashly?
6. Have I received the Eucharist in an unworthily manner?
7. Have I broken any lawful vows or deferred to fulfill them without just cause?

The Third Commandment • “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord God; in it you shall not do any work.”

1. Have I missed Mass on Sundays or other Holy Days of Obligation through my own fault?
2. Have I been late for Mass through my own negligence?
3. Have I been inattentive at Mass?
4. Have I failed in reverence for the Most Blessed Sacrament?
5. Have I done unnecessary servile work (physical labor) or been responsible for others doing such work on a Sunday?
6. Have I given over a considerable portion of my Sundays to temporal affairs and not dedicated a good part of these days to spiritual reading, prayer, and fellowship?

The Next Seven Commandments: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Love one another even as I have loved you.’”

The Fourth Commandment • “Honor your father and mother.”

1. Have I been disrespectful to my parents, neglected them, or despised them?
2. Have I not loved my parents or forsaken them in their necessities?
3. Have I failed in obedience or reverence to others in authority?
4. Have I used my authority over inferiors improperly?
5. Have I mistreated my wife or children?
6. Have I put sports, work, or personal interests over love of my spouse?
7. Have I been disobedient or disrespectful to my husband?
8. Regarding my children:
 - Have I neglected their material needs?
 - Have I failed to care for their early Baptism or their proper religious instruction?
 - Have I allowed them to neglect their religious duties?
 - Have I spoiled my children by inordinately showering them with material things?
 - Have I otherwise failed to discipline them?
 - Have I given bad them example?
 - Have I interfered with their freedom to marry or follow a religious vocation?

The Fifth Commandment • “You shall not kill.”

1. Have I committed any action that resulted in the death of another?
2. Have I had an abortion or helped another procure an abortion?
3. Have I endangered myself or others (e.g. by driving recklessly)?
4. Have I quarreled with anyone?
5. Have I knowingly caused others to sin?
6. Is there anyone to whom I refuse to speak or be reconciled?
7. Have I judged anyone rashly (believing something harmful to another’s character without sufficient reason)?
8. Have I insulted anyone?
9. Have I engaged in gossip or spread gossip?
10. Have I cursed anyone or otherwise wished evil on him?
11. Have I taken revenge or had deliberate thoughts or desires of revenge?
12. Have I taken pleasure in anyone's misfortune?
13. Have I spread scandal?
14. Have I, without a good reason, made known the hidden faults of another (detraction)?
15. Have I lent an ear to scandal about my neighbor?
16. Have I been wrongly jealous or envious of anyone?
17. Have I become intoxicated to the point of drunkenness?
18. Have I used illicit drugs that are harmful to my body?

The Sixth and Ninth Commandments • “You shall not commit adultery.” & “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

1. Have I committed premarital sex?
2. Have I committed adultery or fornication (carnal union between two unmarried people)?
3. Have I practiced artificial birth control (by taking the Pill, using condoms, etc.)?
4. Have I lusted after my spouse by having a disordered desire for pleasure in a selfish way?
5. Have I abused my marriage rights in any other way?
6. Have I viewed pornography?
7. Have I forcibly violated the sexual intimacy of another person?
8. Have I divorced my spouse without due reason (e.g., if civil divorce is the only way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance)?
9. Have I touched or embraced another impurely?
10. Have I sinned with others of the same sex?
11. Have I committed masturbation or otherwise sinned impurely with myself?
12. Have I harbored lustful desires for anyone?
13. Have I entertained impure thoughts?
14. Have I failed to dress or act modestly?
15. Have I done anything to provoke or occasion impure thoughts in others?
16. Have I read indecent literature or looked at indecent pictures?
17. Have I listened to indecent music or danced in an indecent manner?
18. Have I watched suggestive films or programs?
19. Have I permitted my children or others under my charge to do these things?
20. Have I used indecent language or told indecent stories?
21. Have I willingly listened to such stories?
22. Have I boasted of my sins?
23. Have I sinned against chastity in any other way?

*The Seventh and Tenth Commandments • “You shall not steal” &
“You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.”*

1. Have I stolen anything?
2. Have I damaged anyone's property through my own fault?
3. Have I retained what I know belongs to another?
4. Have I cheated or defrauded others?
5. Have I made unjust bargains or contracts?
6. Have I refused or neglected to pay any debts?
7. Have I willfully delayed payment?
8. Have I neglected my duties or been slothful in my work?
9. Have I refused or neglected to help anyone in urgent necessity?
10. Have I failed to give alms?
11. Have I failed to contribute to the work of my pastor with my money or talent?
12. Have I failed to make restitution?
13. Have I been greedy or desired to amass earthly goods without limit?
14. Have I entertained the desire for earthly riches and their attendant power?

The Eighth Commandment • “You shall not bear false witness.”

1. Have I lied?
2. Have I witnessed to what is false?
3. Have I maliciously uttered a false report in order to injure the reputation of a person?
4. Have I written anything that gives an unjustly unfavorable impression of another?
5. Have I defended a false accusation?
6. Have I condemned the innocent?
7. Have I discharged the guilty?
8. Have I reported for truth what is merely doubtful?
9. Have I been hypocritical in any way?

The Seven Deadly Sins

1. **Pride:** An unrestrained appreciation of our own worth.
2. **Avarice or Greed:** An immoderate desire for earthly goods.
3. **Lust:** A hankering after impure pleasures.
4. **Anger:** An inordinate desire for revenge.
5. **Gluttony:** An unrestrained use of food and drink.
6. **Envy:** Sorrow over the good fortune of our neighbor.
7. **Sloth:** Laziness to do right or carelessness to do right and to practice virtue because of the trouble attached to it.

Sins Crying to Heaven for Vengeance

- Murder
- Sodomy
- Oppression of the poor
- Cheating laborers of their just wages

Nine Ways of Aiding Another in Sin

1. Counseling or advising another to sin
2. Commanding another to sin
3. Provoking another to sin
4. Consenting to another's sin
5. Showing another how to sin
6. Praising another's sin
7. Concealing, remaining silent about, or doing nothing to prevent another's sin
8. Taking part in, or enjoying the results of another's sin
9. Defending another's sin

Prayer for a good confession

O my God, by my grievous sins I have re-crucified your divine Son to myself and have deserved your everlasting wrath in the fires of hell. Even more, I have been most ungrateful by my sins to you, my Heavenly Father, who have created me out of nothing, redeemed me by your Son, and sanctified me in the sacraments by your Holy Spirit. But you have spared me to make this confession. Receive me back as your prodigal son and grant me the grace to confess myself well, that I may begin anew to love you with my whole heart and soul, henceforth keeping your commandments and suffering patiently whatever temporal punishment for my sins may remain. I hope by your goodness and power to obtain everlasting life in paradise. Amen.

The Rite of Reconciliation

1. You begin “Confession” by making the sign of the cross, saying: “**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**” The priest may also make the sign of the cross with you.
2. If you do not know the priest, you should inform him of your state in life, the time of your last confession, your difficulties in leading the Christian life, and anything else that may help the priest exercise his ministry in the confessional.
3. Now it is time for you to **confess your sins**. If necessary, the priest will assist you to make a complete confession. If you would like, you can ask the priest to help you make a good confession by asking you a list of questions such as “Have you intentionally skipped Sunday Mass? Have you taken the name of the Lord in vain? Have you harbored anger in your heart towards anyone?” and so forth.
4. The priest may stop you at various points during your confession to give you practical spiritual advice.
5. Next, the priest will give you an act of **penance** to perform once you have left the confessional. It may be creative such as to write a letter of apology to someone you have offended, or it may be very simple like reading a passage of Scripture or saying a prayer.
6. Now it is time for you to say an **act of contrition**, which is a simple expression of your sorrow for having sinned. There are many beautiful pre-written ones that you may use, or you can make up your own.
7. Finally, the priest will administer the formula of **absolution**, through which you are truly forgiven of all of your sins!

Acts of Contrition

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.

O my God,
I am heartily sorry
for having offended Thee,
and I detest all my sins
because of Thy just punishments,
but most of all
because they offend Thee, my God,
Who art all-good
and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve,
with the help of Thy grace,
to sin no more,
and to avoid the near occasions of sin.

O my God,
I am sorry for my sins
because I have offended you.
I know I should love you above all things.
Help me to do penance,
to do better,
and to avoid anything
that might lead me to sin. Amen.

Lord Jesus, Son of God
have mercy on me, a sinner.

Words of Absolution

“God the Father of mercies,
through the death and
resurrection of his Son, has
reconciled the world to himself,
and sent the Holy Spirit among
us for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the
Church may God give you
pardon and peace, and I absolve
you from your sins in the name
of the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit.”

