

Adult Examinations of Conscience Based on the Ten Commandments & The Seven Precepts of the Catholic Church

A good Catholic *Examination of Conscience* can be a great help in making a new start in the life of faith, or to use during seasons of penance such as Advent or Lent.

We use an *Examination of Conscience* to help call to mind our sins and failings during a period of quiet reflection before approaching the priest in Confession.

It's important, if you've been away from the Sacraments for awhile, or during a penitential season, for a good Catholic *Examination of Conscience* to be **thorough**. This will help you learn about things that you may not be aware of. It's also a chance to *develop* your conscience. This is a critical aid for the beginning Catholic, or one who has been away for some time.

To make an examination:

- Set aside some quiet time for reflection.
- Start by praying to the Holy Spirit – “*Veni Sancte Spiritus*” ~ “*Come, Holy Spirit*” – asking for help in making a good *Examination* to prepare for Confession.
- Read through the items on either of these lists (or both) and honestly reflect on your behaviour for each item.
- If necessary, take this list or some brief notes (keep them private!) to Confession to help you remember things.

INSTRUCTION AND PRAYERS FOR CONFESSION

Whoever you are, O Christian soul, that approaches the Holy Sacrament of Penance, remember that you are going to undertake a work on the good performance of which, more than any other duty, your eternal welfare depends.

Therefore, retire apart from every external source of distraction, place yourself in the presence of God, and humbly adore Him. Represent to yourself that this may be the last confession you will ever have the opportunity of making. Let this reflection induce you to discharge every part of your duty, both as to the examination of your conscience, your sorrow for your sins, your firm purpose of amending your life, and the sincerity of your confession, in the most perfect manner possible. Begin by imploring the light and grace of Almighty God, Who alone can discover to you the malice of your sins, and can give you true repentance.

PRAYER BEFORE AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Most merciful God, Father in heaven, relying on Thy goodness and mercy, I come to Thee with filial confidence to confess my sins and to implore Thy forgiveness. Thou wilt not despise a contrite and humble heart. Bless me and receive me again into Thy favour; I acknowledge that I have been most ungrateful to Thee, but I sincerely repent and detest the wrong I have done, and I desire henceforth to walk in the way of perfection.

O Jesus, my Saviour, my good Shepherd, I have strayed far from the path that Thou hast marked out for me; I did not follow in Thy footsteps; I wandered into forbidden places. Repentant and sorrowful, I beg to be admitted again into the fold of Thy faithful followers. I want to confess my sins with the same sincerity as I should wish to do at the moment of my death. My Jesus, I look to Thee with confidence for the grace to examine my conscience well. O Holy Spirit come in Thy mercy; enlighten my mind and strengthen my will that I may know my sins, humbly confess them, and sincerely amend my life. Mary, my Mother, immaculate Spouse of the Holy Ghost, refuge of sinners, assist me by thy intercession. Holy Angels and Saints of God, pray for me. Amen.

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION

Receive my confession, O most kind and merciful Lord Jesus Christ, the one hope of my soul's salvation. Grant, I beseech Thee, contrition to my heart, and tears to my eyes, that I may weep day and night with a humble and pure heart for all my negligences. O Lord, my God, receive my prayers. Saviour of the world, O good Jesus, Who gave Thyself to death on the cross that Thou mightest make sinners safe, look down upon me a wretched sinner, calling upon Thy Holy Name. Do not so regard my evil that Thou forget Thy own goodness. If I have done that for which Thou shouldst condemn me, Thou hast not lost the power to save. Spare me, therefore, Thou Who art my Saviour, and have mercy on my sinful soul. Break the bonds; heal my wounds. Send forth, O most gentle Lord, through the merits of most pure and immaculate Mary ever Virgin, Thy Mother, and all the Saints, Thy light and Thy truth into my soul, that it may show to me in very truth all those defects which I ought to confess. Aid me and teach me to reveal them with a full and contrite heart: Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER CONFESSION

I beseech Thee, O Lord God, that this confession of mine may through the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Thy Mother, and all the Saints, be pleasing and acceptable to Thee. Whatever is wanting in me, or may have been wanting at other times, inadequacy of contrition, purity and integrity of confession, may Thy kindness and mercy supply. Through it make me worthy to have a fuller and more perfect forgiveness in heaven: Who livest and reignest world without. Amen.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

FIRST COMMANDMENT

I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.

Have I...

- Disobeyed the commandments of God or the Church?
- Refused to accept what God has revealed as true, or what the Catholic Church proposes for belief?

- Denied the existence of God?
- Nourished and protected my faith?
- Rejected everything opposed to a sound faith?
- Deliberately misled others about doctrine or the faith?
- Rejected the Catholic faith, joined another Christian denomination, or joined or practiced another religion?
- Joined a group forbidden to Catholics (Free Masons, Communists, etc.)?
- Despaired about my salvation or the forgiveness of my sins?
- Presumed on God's mercy (committing a sin in expectation of forgiveness, or asking for forgiveness without conversion and practicing virtue)?
- Loved someone or something more than God (money, power, sex, ambition, etc.)?
- Let someone or something influence my choices more than God?
- Engaged in superstitious practices (horoscopes, fortune tellers, tarot cards, astrology, etc.)?
- Been involved in the occult (seances, Ouija board, Satanic worship, etc.)?
- Formally left the Catholic Church?
- Deliberately withheld a serious sin or told a lie in confession?

SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Have I...

- Used the name of God (Christ) in cursing or blasphemy?
- Failed to keep vows or promises that I have made to God?
- Spoken about the Faith, the Church, the saints, or sacred things with irreverence, hatred or defiance?
- Watched television or movies, or listened to music that treated God, the Church, the saints, or sacred things irreverently?
- Used vulgar, suggestive or obscene speech?
- Belittled others in my speech?
- Behaved disrespectfully in Church?
- Misused places or things set apart for the worship of God?
- Committed perjury (breaking an oath or lying under oath)?
- Blamed God for my failings?

THIRD COMMANDMENT

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Have I...

- Set time aside each day for personal prayer to God?
- Missed Mass on Sunday or Holy Days (through own fault w/o sufficient reason)?
- Committed a sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament?
- Received the Blessed Sacrament while in the state of mortal (serious) sin?
- Habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason?
- Shop, labour, or do business unnecessarily on Sunday or other Holy Days of Obligation?
- Not attend to taking my children to Mass?
- Knowingly eat meat on a forbidden day (or not fasting on a fast day)?
- Eat or drink within one hour of receiving Communion (other than medical need)?

FOURTH COMMANDMENT
Honour your father and your mother.

Have I...

- (If still under my parents' care) Obeyed all that my parents reasonably asked of me?
- Neglected the needs of my parents in their old age or in their time of need?
- (If still in school) Obeyed the reasonable demands of my teachers?
- Neglected to give my children proper food, clothing, shelter, education, discipline and care (even after Confirmation)?
- Provided for the religious education and formation of my children for as long as they are under my care?
- Ensured that my children still under my care regularly frequent the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion?
- Educated my children in a way that corresponds to my religious convictions?
- Provided my children with a positive, prudent and personalized education in the Catholic teaching on human sexuality?
- Been to my children a good example of how to live the Catholic Faith?
- Prayed with and for my children?
- Lived in humble obedience to those who legitimately exercise authority over me?
- Have I broken the law?
- Have I supported or voted for a politician whose positions are opposed to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church?

FIFTH COMMANDMENT
You shall not kill.

Have I...

- Unjustly and intentionally killed a human being?
- Been involved in an abortion, directly or indirectly (through advice, etc.)?
- Seriously considered or attempted suicide?
- Supported, promoted or encouraged the practice of assisted suicide or mercy killing?
- Deliberately desired to kill an innocent human being?
- Unjustly inflicted bodily harm on another person?
- Unjustly threatened another person with bodily harm?
- Verbally or emotionally abused another person?
- Hated another person, or wished him/her evil?
- Been prejudiced, or unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, colour, nationality, gender or religion?
- Joined a hate group?
- Purposely provoked another by teasing or nagging?
- Recklessly endangered my life or health, or that of another, by my actions?
- Driven recklessly or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
- Abused alcohol or other drugs?
- Sold or given drugs to others to use for non-therapeutic purposes?
- Used tobacco immoderately?
- Over-eaten?
- Encouraged others to sin by giving scandal?
- Helped another to commit a mortal sin (through advice, driving them somewhere, etc.)?

- Caused serious injury or death by criminal neglect?
- Indulged in serious anger?
- Refused to control my temper?
- Been mean to, argued (non-philosophically) with, or willfully hurt someone?
- Been unforgiving to others, when mercy or pardon was requested?
- Sought revenge or hoped something bad would happen to someone?
- Delighted to see someone else get hurt or suffer?
- Treated animals cruelly, causing them to suffer or die needlessly?

SIXTH & NINTH COMMANDMENTS

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

Have I...

- Practiced the virtue of chastity?
- Given in to lust (the desire for sexual pleasure unrelated to spousal love in marriage)?
- Used an artificial means of birth control (condom, pill or other birth control device)?
- Refused to be open to conception, without just cause (*Catechism*, 2368)?
- Participated in immoral techniques for in vitro fertilization or artificial insemination?
- Sterilized my sex organs or procured a vasectomy for contraceptive purposes?
- Deprived my spouse of the marital right, without just cause?
- Claimed my own marital right without concern for my spouse?
- Deliberately caused male climax outside of normal sexual intercourse (*Catechism*, 2366)?
- Willfully entertained impure thoughts?
- Purchased, viewed, or made use of pornography?
- Watched movies and television that involve sex and nudity?
- Listened to music or jokes that are harmful to purity?
- Committed adultery (sexual relations with someone who is married, or with someone other than my spouse)?
- Committed incest (sexual relations with a relative or in-law)?
- Committed fornication (sexual relations with someone of the opposite sex before being lawfully married)?
- Engaged in homosexual activity (sexual activity with someone of the same sex)?
- Committed rape?
- Masturbated (deliberate stimulation of one's own sexual organs for sexual pleasure)?
- Engaged in sexual foreplay (petting) reserved for marriage?
- Preyed upon children or youth for my sexual pleasure?
- Engaged in unnatural sexual activities (used devices, etc.)?
- Engaged in prostitution, or paid for the services of a prostitute?
- Seduced someone, or allowed myself to be seduced?
- Made uninvited and unwelcome sexual advances toward another?
- Purposely dressed immodestly?

SEVENTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

You shall not steal.

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Have I...

- Stolen (taken something that doesn't belong to me against the reasonable will of the owner)?
- Envied others on account of their possessions?
- Tried to live in a spirit of Gospel poverty and simplicity?
- Given generously to others in need?
- Considered that God has provided me with money so that I might use it to benefit others, as well as for my own legitimate needs?
- Freed myself from a consumer mentality?
- Practiced the *Corporal Works of Mercy* (see on last page) prescribed by the Catholic Church?
- Deliberately defaced, destroyed or lost another's property?
- Cheated on a test, taxes, sports, games, or in business?
- Squandered money in compulsive gambling?
- Make a false claim to an insurance company?
- Paid my employees a living wage, or failed to give a full day's work for a full day's pay?
- Failed to honour my part of a contract?
- Failed to make good on a debt?
- Overcharge someone, especially to take advantage of another's hardship or ignorance?
- Misused natural resources?

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

Have I...

- Lied?
 - Knowingly and willfully deceived another?
 - Perjured myself under oath?
 - Gossiped?
 - Committed detraction (destroying/compromising a person's reputation by telling others about his faults for no good reason)?
 - Committed slander or calumny (telling lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation)?
 - Committed libel (writing lies about another person in order to destroy his reputation)?
 - Been guilty of rash judgment (assuming the worst of another person based on circumstantial evidence)?
 - Failed to make reparation for a lie I told, or for harm done to a person's reputation?
 - Failed to speak out in defense of the Catholic Faith, the Church, or of another person?
 - Betrayed another's confidence through speech?
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THE SEVEN PRECEPTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

FIRST PRECEPT

You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

- (see *Examination* under the Third Commandment)

SECOND PRECEPT

You shall confess your sins at least once a year.

Have I...

- Made a good Confession of my mortal sins at least once a year?
- Purposely omitted telling my mortal sins in my last Confession?
- Performed the penance I was given?
- Made reparation for any harm I have done to others?

THIRD PRECEPT

You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.

Have I...

- Fulfilled my Easter duty to receive Holy Communion at least once between the First Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday?
- Received Holy Communion while in the state of mortal sin?
- Fasted an hour before receiving Holy Communion?
- Received Holy Communion more than twice in one day?

FOURTH PRECEPT

You shall keep holy the Holy days of Obligation.

- (see examination under the Third Commandment)

FIFTH PRECEPT

You shall observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.

Have I...

- Done penance every Friday, if not abstaining from meat, then some other form of penance?
- Abstained from meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent (if I am 14 years of age or older)?
- Fasted on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (if I am between the ages of 18 and 59)?
- Spent time in prayer, doing the Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy, as prescribed by the Catholic Church, and practiced self-denial?

SIXTH PRECEPT

You shall contribute to the support of the Church.

Have I...

- Contributed a just amount of my time, talents and money to support my parish and the work of the Church?

SEVENTH PRECEPT

You shall observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

Have I...

- Been living in a valid and licit (legal) marriage according to the laws of the Catholic Church?
- Abandoned my spouse and family by separation or divorce?
- Kept company with someone whom I cannot marry in the Catholic Church?
- Given scandal by living with a member of the opposite sex without the benefit of a marriage blessed by the Catholic Church?
- Entered into marriage with more than one person at the same time?

These detailed Catholic *Examinations of Conscience* based on either the *Ten Commandments* or the *Seven Precepts of the Church* should help you reflect on how you are responding to the demands made by the love of God. For the sake of recollection in the *Sacrament of Confession*, again, you may write on paper what may have pertained to you during your *Examination*. Then, you may bring the script to Confession and read it to the priest. After Confession, it should be destroyed (burned or shredded).

The traditional enumeration of the *Corporal Works of Mercy*, is as follows:

- To feed the hungry;
- To give drink to the thirsty;
- To clothe the naked;
- To harbour the harbourless (shelter the homeless);
- To visit the sick;
- To ransom the captive (visit the imprisoned);
- To bury the dead.

The *Spiritual Works of Mercy* are:

- To instruct the ignorant;
- To counsel the doubtful;
- To admonish sinners;
- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offences willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead.