

# EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

There are no meditations today, just an examination of conscience. Divide the following examination into manageable sections for the entire day. If you are to make a general confession, you may wish to photocopy the examination of conscience and mark the sins that apply to you—destroying the sheets afterwards.

How long ago did you make your last general confession?

[A general confession is recommended, but is not obligatory—consult your confessor if in doubt as to what to do].

Did you receive absolution?

Did you perform your penance?

Did you willfully conceal a mortal sin, or confessed without true sorrow, or without a firm purpose of amendment, or without intending to perform your penance?

Did you, after this bad confession, receive Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin?

How many such sacrilegious Confessions and Communions have you made?

Have you, whilst in a state of mortal sin, received any other Sacraments?

## First Commandment:

### I Am the Lord Thy God, Thou Shalt Not Have Strange Gods Before Me

Have you denied the Catholic Faith, openly rejected, or spoken against any doctrines of the Catholic Church?

Have you disbelieved or willfully indulged in doubts against any article of Faith, or suggested, or encouraged such doubts in others?

Have you betrayed the Catholic Faith by saying that all religions are good, that a man may choose to be saved in any religion whatsoever?

Have you read the Protestant Bible, heretical tracts or books, or sold, or lent them?

Have you attended, or joined in false worship? Have you played or sung in places of false worship? Have you listened to heretical or pagan preachers or lectures? How many times?

Have you exposed your Faith to danger by evil associations? Have you joined any secret society forbidden by the Church? Do you still belong to it? Have you through your own fault, remained ignorant of the doctrines and duties of your religion?

Have you remained a long time—a whole month, or longer—without saying any prayers, or performing any acts of devotion towards God?

Have you committed a sin in a holy place, the church, the graveyard? Have you been guilty of great irreverence in Church, by immodest conversation, by an unbecoming way of dressing, or by other gross misconduct?

Have you consulted fortune-tellers, or seriously made use of superstitious practices, love-potions, charms, horse-shoes, horoscopes, etc.. Read, kept, given, lent or sold dream-books, fortune-telling books and the like?

Have you sinned and remained in sin, thinking that because God is good, He is bound to forgive you?

Have you given way to despair?

Have you made an idol out of sports, or any other activity or creature?

Have you been ashamed of your Faith?

## **Second Commandment:**

### **Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of the Lord Thy God in Vain**

Have you been guilty of blasphemy by angry, injurious or insulting words against God or any of His perfections, or against the Catholic Church, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary or any saints? Did you ever hate God?

Have you pronounced, in a blasphemous or irreverent manner, or in anger, the Holy Name of God, the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or abused the words of Holy Scripture by any indecent or grossly irreverent application?

Have you sworn falsely? Have you done so to the prejudice of your neighbor? Have you joined an oath-bound secret society? How many oaths did you take in the society? Did you take an oath to be revenged or to commit some other crime? Have you induced others to swear falsely or unnecessarily, or to break a lawful oath?

Have you cursed yourself or your neighbor? Did you mean it? Was this sin habitual?

Have you made any rash vows? Have you broken or neglected a lawful vow, or changed it without permission?

## **Third Commandment:**

### **Remember Thou Keep Holy the Lord's Day**

#### **The Precepts of the Church**

1. To assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
2. To fast and abstain on the days appointed.
3. To confess your sins at least once a year.
4. To go to Communion during Easter time.
5. To contribute to the support of the Church.
6. To observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

Have you on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation willfully missed Mass, or arrived late, or left before Mass was over? Have you talked, laughed and gazed about during Mass?

Have you been habitually absent from the sermons and instructions?

Have you performed unnecessary servile work on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, or caused others to do so?

Have you desecrated these days, by frequenting ungodly company, by sinful amusements, gambling, immodest dancing, or drinking to excess?

Have you, without necessity, eaten meat or caused others to eat meat on days of abstinence? Have you broken the laws of fasting?

Have you neglected to contribute, according to your means, to the support of the Church and Her priests?

Have you been married before a civil magistrate, or even before an heretical preacher?

Have you ever, without the Church's dispensation, married a relative or a non-Catholic person?

Have you contracted marriage in any way forbidden by the Church?

## **Fourth Commandment:**

### **Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother**

Have you despised, or even hated your parents, wished their death, or hoped that some other misfortune should befall them?

Have you insulted, mocked, ridiculed or cursed them?

Have you threatened them, or even lifted your hand to strike them?

Have you disobeyed them in serious matters when they forbade you to keep bad company, read bad books and papers and so on? Have you sorely grieved your parents by your ingratitude, or misconduct?

Have you, while still a minor, promised or even contracted marriage without your parents' knowledge and consent?

Have you neglected or refused to help them in their wants? Have you been ashamed of them on account of their poverty, class or appearance?

Have you faithfully accomplished their last will? Have you neglected to pray for them?

Have you been disrespectful and disobedient to your spiritual superiors, the Pope, the bishops and priests of the Church? Have you behaved towards them in a haughty and insulting manner? Did you refuse to pray for them, or for their conversion?

Do you pray for your country, for your government? Have you placed your country above God?

Have you taken part with the disaffected and seditious (revolutionary activities)? Have you ever joined a Communist or a Liberal association?

Have you resisted the lawful authorities of the country, taken part in any mob violence, or disturbed public peace?

## **Fifth Commandment:**

### **Thou Shalt Not Kill**

Have you by act, participation, instigation, counsel, consent or silence, been guilty of anyone's death or bodily injury?

Have you intended or attempted to take another's life?

Have you been guilty of the sin of abortion? Have you counseled or helped another person obtain an abortion?

Have you intended or attempted to take your own life?

Have you injured your health by excess in eating or drinking?

Have you been drunk or been the cause of drunkenness in others?

Have you used drugs? Have you introduced others to drugs?

Have you by act, advice or consent done anything to hinder or to destroy life?

Have you wished the death of your neighbor, or that some other misfortune befall him? Have you injured, or attempted to injure, or ill-treat others?

Have you been at enmity with your neighbor? Have you refused to speak to him or salute him? Are you reconciled with him?

Have you ever been wildly angry, beyond reason? Have you excited others to anger or revenge?

Have you through avarice, passion or revenge, engaged in vexatious or unjust lawsuits?

Have you harmed anyone's soul by giving scandal, destroying this soul through bad example? Have you, by wicked words, deeds or bad example, ruined innocent persons, taught them bad habits or things they should not know?

Have you exposed yourself or others to temptation?

Have you watched bad movies? Have you listened to bad music? Have you kept and read bad magazines? Have you allowed your children to do these things?

Have you dressed in an improper or indecent manner (mini skirts, tight pants, plunging necklines, see-through blouses and skirts, bikinis, etc...)?

Have you thrown temptation in the way of the weak? Have you tried to dissuade or discourage those who were willing to repent and reform?

Have you dated when you should not have done so, when you were not mature enough to get married? Did you offend God during your courtship?

Have you neglected to give alms according to your means, or to relieve those in distress?

## **Sixth and Ninth Commandments:**

### **Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery & Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife**

You must mention those circumstances that change the nature of your sin: the sex, the relationship and the condition, whether married, single or bound by a vow; and whether you were married or single at the time of committing the sin?

Have you dwelt with willful pleasure on impure thoughts or imaginations, or consented to them in your heart?

Have you willfully desired to see or do anything impure?

Have you made use of impure language, allusions, or words of double meaning? How many were listening to you?

Have you listened with willful pleasure to immodest language? Have you sung immodest songs or listened to them?

Have you boasted of your immorality?

Have you read immoral books or papers, or lent or sold them to others? Have you written, sent or received improper letters or messages? Have you gazed with willful pleasure on improper objects, images or cards, or shown them to others?

Have you voluntarily exposed yourself to the occasions of sin by sinful curiosity, by keeping dangerous company, by frequenting dangerous places, dangerous or sinful amusements; by immodest dances and indecent plays; by undue familiarity with persons of the opposite sex?

Do you keep sinful company now? Have you in the past, or do you now, live with someone who is not your spouse in the eyes of God?

Have you by your freedom of manners, your immodest dress, etc., been the cause of temptation to others?

Have you ruined an innocent person by introducing them to immorality?

Have you been guilty of improper liberties with others? How far have you carried your sinful conduct?

Have you been guilty of seduction or rape? Did you accomplish your designs by a false promise of marriage? Have you refused to repair the injury done?

Have you been addicted to solitary sexual sins (masturbation)? Did it become habitual?

Have you committed unnatural sexual sins?

Have you taken part in, or facilitated, the sins of others?

Have you been guilty of the sin of fornication, or adultery?

Have you used artificial birth control? Have you used natural birth control without sufficient reason? Have you tried to cheat God and His Law?

## **Seventh and Tenth Commandments:**

### **Thou Shalt Not Steal & Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Goods**

As regards sins of theft, you should tell the priest, as exactly as possible, the value of what you took, or the amount of damage caused by your injustice, so that the priest may judge whether your sins are mortal or not, and what restitution you have to make.

Have you stolen money or anything of value? What was its value? Is it still in your possession? How much did you take each time?

Have you stolen anything consecrated to God, or from a holy place? This is a sacrilege, as well as theft.

Have you charged exorbitant prices, or made out false bills, or falsified the quality of your goods?

Have you cheated in games? Have you been in the habit of gambling, if so to what extent?

Have you engaged in deceitful speculations or enterprises to the injury of the simple and unwary?

Have you defrauded your creditors? Have you been guilty of forgery or swindling? Have you charged exorbitant interest?

Have you robbed the poor?

Have you passed counterfeit or mutilated money? Have you been guilty of bribery, or taking bribes?

Have you kept things you found without inquiring for the owner? Have you retained any of the money entrusted to you?

Have you failed to return things borrowed? Have you neglected to pay your debts? Have you contracted debts without any reasonable hope of paying?

Have you bought, received, or concealed things you knew to be stolen?

Have you caused ruin or damage to the property of another? Did you allow your livestock to injure the neighbor's crop, etc...?

Have you squandered the money of your husband, wife, parents, etc...in buying costly dresses, jewelry, in drinking, in drugs, etc...? Have you been careless of goods entrusted to your charge?

Have you received pay for work or service you have never done, or have done it so poorly that it had to be done over again?

Have you sought to gain your cause by bribery, threats, or other unjust means?

Have you damaged or destroyed (e.g., by fire) your property and kept the insurance money?

Have you, in your dealings, taken advantage of the simple, the poor, the young and inexperienced? Have you made hard bargains with the poor, or those in distress?

Have you been guilty of fraud or embezzlement in any public office or private trust?

Have you caused any injury or loss by your negligence, or culpable ignorance, in the discharge of your profession or employment?

Have you, in any way, taken part in another's theft, fraud or injustice? Have you concealed the injustice of others, when it was your duty to report it?

Have you attempted, or intended, or willfully desired to rob, steal, defraud or commit any kind of injustice?

Have you, by calumny, or other unjust means, caused anyone to lose his position or reputation?

Have you voted for anyone you knew to be unfit for office?

Examine whether you have repaired all the injustice you have done. Your sins will not be pardoned so long as you refuse or knowingly and willfully neglect to make restitution. If what you have unjustly acquired is no longer in your possession, return the value of it.

If you cannot restore the whole, restore at least a part without delay. If you cannot restore it at once, you must have the firm and sincere resolution to do so as soon as possible and also strive earnestly to acquire the means of doing so. The obligation of restitution is binding until it is fully discharged. Restitution must be made to the owner. If the owner cannot be found, you must give the money to the poor, the Church, or some charity.

## **Eighth Commandment:**

### **Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor**

Have you taken a false oath or advised others to do so?

Have you signed false papers or documents, or forged any writings? What injury have you done thereby?

Have you been guilty of malicious lying? Have you put into circulation, or repeated any scandalous report, you knew or believed to be false?

Have you been guilty of detraction in serious matters, by making known your neighbor's secret sins or defects?

Have you done anything to blacken his character or injure his interests?

Have you caused ill-feeling between others by tale-bearing? Have you revealed an important or a professional secret?

Have you, without authority, read another's letters?

Have you endeavored to repair the harm you have done, by contradicting your false reports? Have you honestly tried to restore the good name that you have injured?

Have you spoken against a member of the clergy, because he is consecrated to God? This is also a sacrilege .

Have you been guilty of unjust suspicions and rash judgments?

## **The Seven Capital Sins**

**Pride, Avarice, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Anger, Sloth.**

### **The Six Sins Against The Holy Ghost**

(1) To despair of your own salvation; (2) to presume to be saved without merits; (3) to fight the truth knowingly; (4) to be envious of the graces of another; (5) to be obstinate in sin; (6) to die unrepentant.

# The Particular Duties Of Your State

## Parents and Guardians

Have you failed to always take proper care of the life and health of your children? Have you exposed them to great danger before their birth? Have you failed to provide for their wants? Have you given them proper food, clothing, etc...? Have you ever deserted them?

Have you failed to teach them a trade or profession, so that they could gain an honest livelihood?

Have you manifested an unjust preference for one, to the prejudice of the others? Have you been neglectful, unkind and even cruel to your children, stepchildren or wards?

Have you forced your children into a state of life for which they had no vocation? Have you hindered them from following their vocation to the religious or ecclesiastical state?

Have you, without reasonable cause, opposed their inclination with regard to marriage?

Have you failed to procure for them a good and Catholic education according to your means?

Have you neglected to teach them their prayers? Have you neglected to inspire them, in their tender years, with the love of God and a horror of sin?

Have you delayed their baptism too long? Have you neglected to have them prepared and brought, at the proper age, to Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation?

Have you neglected their religious instruction, or sent them to heretical or Godless schools? Have you failed to take them to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days?

Have you caused them not to observe abstinence on the days prescribed?

Have you placed them in a situation where they could not practice their religion, or where their faith or their virtue was in danger?

Have you exposed their innocence to danger by letting the different sexes sleep together, or by keeping them at night in your own bedroom?

Have you kept watch on their conduct carefully? Have you seen where they spend their time, with what companions they associate, and if they are addicted to any secret vice? Have you allowed them to wander where they would? Have you entrusted them to the care of servants that were irreligious or of loose morals?

Have you allowed them to read unbecoming stories, trashy novels and other dangerous books? Have you allowed them to take part in sinful or dangerous amusements, or to watch bad television?

Have you let them date when they were not mature enough to do so, or when they were not old enough to get married?

Have you allowed them unnecessary freedom with persons of the other sex; visits alone, or at improper hours, or to stay out late at night? Have you allowed immodest dances in your house? Have you allowed them to dance immodestly?

Have you failed to correct and punish them when they deserved it? Have you allowed them to curse, or use improper language without punishing them?

Have you, through indifference or misguided affection, left them without restraint? Have you on the contrary cursed them in anger; treated them brutally, or exasperated or scandalized them by violent or foul language, abusive names, etc...?

Have you scandalized them by bad example, by neglecting your religion?

## **The Married**

Did you enter into the state of matrimony for bad and non-Catholic motives?

Have you, by your conduct, been the cause of jealousy and grief to your spouse?

Have you profaned the sanctity of matrimony by misuse, or by trying to hinder its lawful end—namely, the procreation of children?

Have you sinned against each other by angry words, opprobrious names, or even by quarrels and blows?

Have you without just cause and lawful permission, abandoned your spouse in life, lived separately or remained long absent?

## **Husband**

Have you been faithless to your marriage vows?

Have you treated your wife in a gross, cruel or tyrannical manner, beaten her, or abused her in your anger? Have you made her unhappy by your coldness, stinginess, neglect and unfeeling conduct, or by spending your leisure time too often away from home? Have you failed to treat her with attention and forbearance, when she was in a delicate condition?

Have you compelled her to act against her conscience to sin against the laws of nature in the marital act?

Have you neglected to support your wife and children? Have you squandered your earnings, or the property of your wife?

Have you caused discord by your selfishness and jealousy, and by your unfriendly conduct towards her relatives?

Have you made your home disagreeable by your ill temper, abusive language and fault-finding, or by pretended or imaginary ailments?

## **Wife**

Have you broken your marriage vows? Have you given rise to jealousy by your levity, or by trying to win the admiration and affection of others?

Have you, unknown to your husband, made useless and extravagant expenses for yourself or relatives?

Have you caused discord by your selfishness and jealousy and by your unfriendly conduct towards his relatives?

Have you been respectful and obedient to him in all things reasonable and lawful?

Have you made your home disagreeable by your ill temper, scolding and fault-finding, or by pretended or imaginary ailments?

Have you without just cause refused him his marriage rights? Have you induced him to offend God and act contrary to the laws of nature in the sexual domain?

Have you done your part towards the support of the family, or have you, on the contrary, been idle and neglectful of your household duties?



## Students

Have you failed to study seriously and with diligence? Have you failed to spend enough time on your studies? Have you missed an exam because of laziness?

Have you abused the liberty you have at college or university, because you are far away from your family?

Have you spent too much money on useless things and entertainment?

Have you spent too much time on your intellectual training, forgetting about your spiritual life?

Have you failed to avoid the evil influences of any bad teachers, books or companions? Have you failed to act as a Catholic with your acquaintances? Have you been ashamed of your faith?

## Young Ladies and Young Men

Have you been helpful, assisting in your home, or, on the contrary, been a hindrance?

Have you been too concerned with the way you look, and do you spend too much time with these frivolities?

Have you dressed decently, with dignity, simplicity, and modesty? Are you superficial and worldly?

Have you kept any occasions of sin in your life, or are you an occasion of sin for someone else?

Have you cultivated your intelligence with good reading, or have you wasted your time with novels, magazines, television, too much sport?

Have you mastered your will with the spirit of sacrifice, self-denial, and charity?

Have you been the master of your heart, your feelings and your thoughts?

## Employers

Have you treated your employees and servants in a harsh or tyrannical manner? Have you overburdened them with work, or obliged them to do unnecessary work on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Have you kept them from Mass on those days?

Have you always given them proper and sufficient food and treated them kindly in sickness? Have you dismissed them unjustly before the time agreed on? Have you refused them their just dues, neglected to pay them, or taken advantage of their poverty or simplicity to engage them on hard or unjust terms?

Have you failed to encourage and exhort them to keep out of sin and dangerous occasions, to go regularly to Mass, to frequent the Sacraments? Have you been in any way an occasion of sin to them?

Have you failed to watch over their morals? Have you suffered them to keep improper company or late hours?

## Employees

Have you failed to serve your employers diligently and faithfully? Have they suffered any harm or loss through your fault, neglect, theft or wastefulness?

Have you retained part of what they gave you to make purchases, or taken anything under pretense that your wages were too low? How much?

Have you revealed unnecessarily the faults of your employers, sowed discord at work or in their families, or been the cause, by false or malicious complaints, of other employees being discharged?

Are you in a situation where your Faith and morals are endangered, or where you have not the opportunity of fulfilling your religious duties?

Have you connived or aided your employers in their crimes? Have you printed, bound, or sold books or papers against faith or morals?

## **Magistrates and Public Officers**

Have you failed to faithfully discharge the duties of your office?

Have you through weakness, human respect, desire of popularity or eagerness for office and personal advantage, betrayed the public interest, or sacrificed the rights of any individual, or suffered crime to go unchecked and unpunished? In what way?

Have you directly or indirectly received bribes, or allowed yourself to be influenced, by promises or presents, in the administration of justice, or in your official conduct?

Have you embezzled public funds, or used them to your own advantage? Have you enriched yourself or your friends at the expense of the public by means of unjust contracts? In what way and how much?

Have you abused your official power to gratify revenge, to favor your friends, or to shield or aid the wicked?

Have you neglected the cause of the poor, the innocent, the helpless and the oppressed?

Have you given scandal by open neglect and disregard of your holy religion and your Catholic duties?

## **Lawyers, Notaries and Clerks of Court**

Have you advocated unjust claims or sustained an unjust cause? Did you obtain an unjust decision? Have you knowingly prosecuted an innocent person?

Have you injured the cause of your client by treachery, gross ignorance, or neglect?

Have you given treacherous, doubtful, or dishonest advice? Have you unjustly flattered the hopes of your client, or otherwise encouraged useless litigation?

Have you been guilty of fraud, bribery or other injustices? Have you procured false testimony, or encouraged others to commit perjury?

Have you been guilty of fraud in drawing up legal documents, or made them ambiguous, or contrary to the intentions of the persons concerned?

Have you falsified, destroyed, or substituted documents? Have you made out false bills of cost, demanded unlawful or exorbitant fees, or charged anyone for services not rendered? How much have you cheated in this manner?

## **Physicians and Surgeons**

Have you undertaken the care of the sick without sufficient science or experience? Have you been negligent in the treatment of serious or extraordinary cases? Have you endangered persons by dangerous remedies or made merciless experiments on patients in hospitals or on the poor?

Have you failed to consult other physicians when necessary, or have you made choice of such as would connive with your mistakes?

Have you caused needless expenses by unnecessary consultations, useless remedies, etc...?

Have you followed the opinions of others contrary to the laws of God, or sanctioned an improper course of treatment? What injury and injustice have you caused thereby?

Have you undertaken surgical operations beyond your science or skill, or conducted them recklessly?

Have you willfully taken the life of a child? Have you directly or indirectly procured, permitted or encouraged abortion or sinful birth control?

Have you taught or encouraged others to hinder conception or to practice onanism?

Have you taught or encouraged the use, or abuse of drugs, liquors, etc...?

Have you hastened anyone's death, at his own request, or the request of his relatives? Have you failed to warn those in danger of death, so that they could receive the sacraments in time?

Have you suffered a child to die without baptism?

## Pharmacists

Have you sold medicine or any other object to destroy life, to hinder conception, or to excite the passions?

Have you sold liquor to drunkards? Have you sold drugs to those who abuse drugs?

Those Having a Hotel, Bar, or Public House

Have you overcharged your guest, or adulterated your liquors? To what amounts, and how often? Have you served alcohol to drunkards, or to those partially drunk, or allowed anyone to drink to excess in your house or place?

Have you taken money from those whom you knew to be ruining their family by wasting their money?

Have you made your house a place of dissipation on Sundays and even during Mass? Have you allowed gambling in your establishment, or tolerated blasphemy, obscenity or quarrels?

Have you allowed persons to visit or lodge for immoral purposes? Have you made it a place of scandalous liaisons, sinful amusements, immodest dances or other sinful abuses?

Have you kept immodest pictures and papers in your house? Have you shown immodest movies? Is your business an occasion of sin to your neighbor, or injury to your family and a hindrance to your own salvation?

*Though the above examination of conscience is quite extensive, there may be other sins that spring to mind. If you decide to make a general confession, you could write out your sins, or photocopy the pages containing the examination of conscience and highlight the relevant sins. In both cases, destroy the papers after having confessed, which apart from preserving secrecy, will also be symbolic of the sins being "destroyed" in the sight of God.*

*Do not spend all of your time just examining your conscience, but also try to spend a considerable amount of time with view to increasing your sorrow for the sins you have committed. The remainder of the week could be thus used, until you make your confession. Remember that the degree of contrition can also, if intense, not only take away the guilt of sin, but also remit all temporal punishment due to those sins (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Supplement, Q.5, A.3).*

*It is not absolutely necessary to go to confession at this point in the preparation, as St. Louis states that it can be made on the day of consecration itself. However, since the first two weeks of the preparation deal with a rejection of the spirit of the world, which is manifested through sin, and a thorough knowledge of self—which implies an examination of conscience—then the sooner the confession is made, the sooner the soul would be relieved of the unnecessary burden of carrying the remembrance, and perhaps the guilt, of one's own sins.*