

An Examination of Conscience for Adults

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I believe in a loving Savior Who forgives my sins and Who gives me the grace to become a saint. Jesus Christ, through the ministry of His priests, does both in the Sacrament of Penance.

"As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you ... Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

"If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18)

"I am not come to call the just, but sinners." (Matt. 9:13)

"Men have received from God a power not granted to angels or archangels. Never was it said to the heavenly spirits, 'Whatsoever you shall bind and unbind on earth shall be bound and unbound in heaven.' The princes of this world can only bind and unbind the body. The power of the priest extends further; it reaches the soul, and it is exercised not only in baptizing, but still more in pardoning sins. Let us not blush, then, to confess our faults. He who blushes to discover his sins to a man, and who will not confess, shall be covered with shame on the Day of Judgment in the presence of the whole universe." (St. John Chrysostom, Treatise on Priests, Bk. 3)

Prayer before Confession: O Lord, grant me light to see myself as Thou dost see me, and the grace to be truly and effectively sorry for my sins. O Mary, help me to make a good confession.

How to Confess: First examine your conscience well, then tell the priest the specific kind of sins you have committed and, to the best of your ability, how many times you have committed them since your last good confession. You are obliged to confess only mortal sins, since you can obtain forgiveness for your venial sins by sacrifices and acts of charity. If you are in doubt about whether a sin is mortal or venial, mention your doubt to the confessor. Remember also, confession of venial sins is very helpful for avoiding sin and advancing toward Heaven.

Necessary conditions for a sin to be mortal:

1. Serious Matter
2. Sufficient Reflection
3. Full Consent of the Will

Preliminary Considerations:

1. Have I ever deliberately failed to confess a past serious sin, or have I willfully disguised or hidden such a sin?
Note: The deliberate concealing of a mortal sin invalidates one's confession and makes the person guilty of another mortal sin. Remember that the confession is private under the Seal of Confession, i.e., it is a mortal sin for the priest to reveal the matter of one's confession to anyone else.
2. Have I been guilty of irreverence for this sacrament by failing to examine my conscience carefully?
3. Have I failed to do the penance given to me by the priest?
4. Have I any habits of serious sin to confess first (e.g. impurity, drunkenness, etc.)?

First Commandment: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. (Including sins against Faith, Hope and Charity)

1. Have I neglected the knowledge of my faith as taught in the catechism, such as the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Sacraments, the Our Father, etc.?
2. Have I deliberately doubted or denied any of the teachings of the Church?
3. Have I taken part in any non-Catholic worship?
4. Am I a member of any non-Catholic religious organization, secret society or anti-Catholic group?
5. Have I knowingly read any heretical, blasphemous or anti-Catholic literature?
6. Have I practiced any superstitions (such as horoscopes, fortune telling, Ouija board, etc.)?
7. Have I omitted religious duties or practices through motives of human respect?
8. Have I recommended myself daily to God?
9. Have I been faithful to my daily prayers?
10. Have I abused the Sacraments in any way? Received them irreverently, e.g. Communion in the Hand without obeying the principles and the 7 rules promulgated by Paul VI as binding in this matter?
11. Have I made fun of God, Our Lady, the Saints, the Church, the Sacraments, other holy things?
12. Have I been guilty of great irreverence in church, e.g., conversation, behavior, or dress?
13. Have I been indifferent with regard to my Catholic Faith — believing one can be saved in any religion, that all religions are equal?
14. Have I presumed on God's mercy at any time?
15. Have I despaired of God's mercy?

16. Have I hated God?
17. Have I given too much importance to any creature, activity, object or opinion?

Second Commandment: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

1. Have I sworn by God's name falsely, rashly or in slight and trivial matters?
2. Have I murmured or complained against God (blasphemy)?
3. Have I cursed myself or others, or any creature?
4. Have I angered others so as to make them swear or blaspheme God?
5. Have I broken a vow made to God?

Third Commandment: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

1. Have I missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of obligation?
2. Have I been late for Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of obligation or left early through my own fault?
3. Have I made others miss Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of obligation, leave early or be late for Mass?
4. Have I been willfully distracted during Mass?
5. Have I done or commanded unnecessary servile work on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation?
6. Have I bought or sold things not of necessity on Sunday and Holy Days of obligation?

Fourth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother.

1. Have I been disobedient or disrespectful to my parents, or have I neglected or refused to aid them in their wants or to do their last will?
2. Have I shown irreverence to others in positions of authority?
3. Have I maligned or insulted priests or others consecrated to God?
4. Have I failed in due reverence to aged persons?
5. Have I mistreated my spouse or my children?
6. Have I been disobedient or disrespectful to my husband?
7. Regarding my children:

Have I neglected their material needs?

Have I failed to care for their early baptism? *(See below.)

Have I failed to care for their proper religious education?

Have I allowed them to neglect their religious duties?

Have I allowed them to date/go steady without the prospect of marriage within the near future? (St. Alphonsus says 1 year maximum.)

Have I failed to supervise the company they keep?

Have I failed to discipline them when they need it?

Have I given them a bad example?

Have I scandalized them by arguing with my spouse in front of my children?

Have I scandalized them by cursing or swearing in front of them?

Have I guarded modesty in the home?

Have I permitted them to wear immodest clothing (mini skirts; tight pants, dresses, or sweaters; see-through blouses, short-shorts, revealing swim suits, etc.)?†

Have I denied their freedom to marry or follow a religious vocation?

*Infants should be baptized as soon as possible. Apart from particular diocesan prescriptions, it appears to be the general view ... that an infant should be baptized within about a week or ten days after birth. Many Catholics defer Baptism for a fortnight or a little over. The view that Baptism should be administered within three days after birth is considered too strict. St. Alphonsus, following common opinion, thought that a delay, without reason, beyond ten or eleven days would be a grievous sin. In view of modern custom, which is known and not corrected by local Ordinaries, a delay beyond a month without reason would be a serious sin. If there is no probable danger to the child, parents cannot be convicted of serious sin if they defer Baptism a little beyond three weeks at the outside, but the practice of having an infant baptized within about a week or ten days of birth is to be strongly commended, and indeed an earlier date may be rightly recommended. — H. Davis, S.J., *Moral and Pastoral Theology*, Vol. III, pg. 65, Sheed and Ward, New York 1935

†Ask for leaflet LF05 The Marylike Standards for Modesty in Dress

Fifth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

1. Have I procured, desired, or hastened the death or bodily injury of anyone?
2. Have I borne hatred?
3. Have I oppressed anyone?
4. Have I desired revenge?
5. Have I caused enmity between others?
6. Have I quarreled or fought with anyone?

7. Have I wished evil on anyone?
8. Have I intended or attempted to injure or mistreat others?
9. Is there anyone with whom I refuse to speak, or against whom I bear a grudge?
10. Have I taken pleasure in anyone's misfortunes?
11. Have I been jealous or envious of anyone?
12. Have I had or attempted to have an abortion or counseled anyone else to do so?
13. Have I mutilated my body unnecessarily in any way?
14. Have I entertained thoughts of suicide, desired to commit suicide or attempted suicide?
15. Have I become drunk, used illicit drugs?
16. Have I overeaten or do I neglect to eat properly, i.e., nutritious foods?
17. Have I failed to correct in Charity?
18. Have I harmed anyone's soul, especially children, by giving scandal through bad example?
19. Have I harmed my own soul by intentionally and without necessity exposing it to temptations, e.g.: bad TV, bad music, beaches, etc.

Sixth and Ninth Commandments: Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

1. Have I denied my spouse his or her marriage rights?
2. Have I practiced birth control (by pills, devices, withdrawal)?
3. Have I abused my marriage rights in any other way?
4. Have I committed adultery or fornication (premarital sex)?
5. Have I committed any unnatural sin against purity (homosexuality or lesbianism, etc.)?
6. Have I touched or embraced another impurely?
7. Have I engaged in prolonged or passionate kissing?
8. Have I engaged in petting?
9. Have I sinned impurely by myself (masturbation)?
10. Have I entertained or taken pleasure in impure thoughts?
11. Have I indulged in lustful desires for anyone, or willfully desired to see or do anything impure?
12. Have I willfully indulged in any sexual pleasure whether complete or incomplete?
13. Have I been an occasion of sin for others by wearing tight or otherwise revealing and immodest clothing?
14. Have I done anything to provoke or occasion impure thoughts or desires in others deliberately or through carelessness?
15. Have I read indecent literature or looked at bad pictures?
16. Have I watched suggestive movies, TV programs, or Internet pornography or permitted my children to do so?
17. Have I used indecent language or told indecent stories?
18. Have I willingly listened to such stories?
19. Have I boasted of my sins or taken delight in past sins?
20. Have I been in lewd company?
21. Have I consented to impure glances?
22. Have I neglected to control my imagination?
23. Have I prayed at once to banish such bad thoughts and temptations?
24. Have I avoided laziness, gluttony, idleness, and the occasions of impurity?
25. Have I attended immodest dances or indecent plays?
26. Have I unnecessarily remained alone in the company of someone of the opposite sex?

Note Well: Do not be afraid to tell the priest any impure sin you may have committed. Do not hide or try to disguise any such sin. The priest is there to help you and forgive you. Nothing you say will shock him, so do not be afraid, no matter how ashamed you might be.

Seventh and Tenth Commandments: Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

1. Have I stolen anything? What or how much?
2. Have I damaged anyone's property?
3. Have I negligently spoiled anyone's property?
4. Have I been negligent in the stewardship of other people's money or goods?
5. Have I cheated or defrauded others?
6. Have I gambled excessively?
7. Have I refused or neglected to pay any debts?
8. Have I acquired anything known to be stolen?
9. Have I failed to return things borrowed?
10. Have I cheated my employer of an honest day's work?
11. Have I cheated my employees of their wages?
12. Have I refused or neglected to help anyone in urgent need?
13. Have I failed to make restitution for my stealing, cheating and frauds? (Ask the priest how to go about making restitution, that is, returning to the owner what you unjustly took from him/her.)
14. Have I been envious of another because I don't have what he has?

15. Have I been jealous of what another has?
16. Have I been stingy?
17. Have I been grasping and avaricious, placing too great importance upon material goods and comforts? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the true treasures of Heaven?

Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

1. Have I lied about anyone (calumny)?
2. Have my lies caused them any material or spiritual harm?
3. Have I rashly judged anyone (i.e. believed firmly, without sufficient evidence, that they are guilty of some moral defect or crime)?
4. Have I injured the good name of another by revealing true but hidden faults (detraction)?
5. Have I disclosed another's sins?
6. Have I been guilty of talebearing, (i.e. reporting something unfavorable said of someone by another so as to create enmity between them)?
7. Have I lent an ear to or encouraged the spreading of scandal about my neighbor?
8. Have I taken false oaths or signed false documents?
9. Am I, without necessity, critical, negative or ever uncharitable in my talk?
10. Have I flattered others?

The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Have I neglected to do the following when circumstances obliged me:

The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. To admonish sinners. 2. To instruct the ignorant. 3. To counsel the doubtful. 4. To comfort the sorrowful.
5. To bear wrongs patiently. 6. To forgive all injuries. 7. To pray for the living and the dead?

The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy

1. To feed the hungry. 2. To give drink to the thirsty. 3. To clothe the naked. 4. To visit and ransom the captives.
5. To house the homeless. 6. To visit the sick. 7. To bury the dead?

Remember our Holy Catholic Faith teaches us that ... as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead. (James, 2:26)

The Seven Deadly Sins and the Opposite Virtues

1. Pride.....Humility
2. Covetousness.....Liberality
3. Lust.....Chastity
4. Anger.....Meekness
5. Gluttony.....Temperance
6. Envy.....Brotherly love
7. Sloth.....Diligence

Five Effects of Pride

1. Vainglory: a. Boasting b. Dissimulation / Duplicity 2. Ambition 3. Contempt for others 4. Anger / Revenge / Resentment 5. Stubbornness / Obstinacy.

Nine Ways of Being an Accessory to Another's Sin

- a. Have I knowingly caused others to sin?
- b. Have I co-operated in the sins of others:
 1. By counsel. 2. By command. 3. By consent. 4. By provocation. 5. By praise or flattery. 6. By concealment. 7. By partaking. 8. By silence. 9. By defense of the ill done?

The Four Sins which Cry to Heaven for Vengeance

1. Willful Murder. 2. The sin of Sodomy or Lesbianism. 3. Oppression of the poor. 4. Defrauding the laborer of his just wages.

The Six Commandments of the Church

1. Have I heard Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation?
2. Have I fasted and abstained on the days appointed and have I kept the Eucharistic fast?
3. Have I confessed at least once a year?
4. Have I received the Holy Eucharist at least once in the year?
5. Have I contributed as far as I must to the support of the Church?
6. Have I observed the laws of the Church concerning Marriage, i.e.: Marriage without a priest present, or marrying a relative or non-Catholic?

The Five Blasphemies Against the Immaculate Heart of Mary

1. Have I blasphemed against the Immaculate Conception?
2. Have I blasphemed against Our Lady's Perpetual Virginity?
3. Have I blasphemed against Our Lady's Divine Maternity? Have I failed to recognize Our Lady as the Mother of all men?
4. Have I publicly sought to sow in the hearts of children indifference or scorn, or even hatred, of this Immaculate Mother?
5. Have I outraged Her directly in Her Holy images?

Finally:

Have I received Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin? (This is a very grave sacrilege.)

St. Anthony Mary Claret's Examination of Venial Sins

The soul should avoid all venial sins, especially those which pave the way for grave sin. It is not enough, my soul, to have a firm resolve to suffer death rather than consent to any grave sin. It is necessary to have a like resolution to venial sin. He who does not find in himself this will, cannot have security. There is nothing which can give us such a certain security of eternal salvation as an uninterrupted cautiousness to avoid even the lightest venial sin, and a notable, all-extensive earnestness reaching to all practices of the spiritual life — earnestness in prayer, and in dealing with God; earnestness in mortification and self-denial; earnestness in being humble and in accepting contempt; earnestness in obeying and renouncing one's own self-will; earnest love of God and neighbor. He who wants to gain this earnestness and keep it, must necessarily have the resolve to always avoid especially the following venial sins:

1. The sin of giving entrance into your heart to any unreasonable suspicion or unfair judgment against your neighbor.
2. The sin of introducing talk about another's defects or offending charity in any other way, even lightly.
3. The sin of omitting out of laziness our spiritual practices or of performing them with voluntary neglect.
4. The sin of having a disordered affection for somebody.
5. The sin of having a vain esteem for oneself, or of taking vain satisfaction in things pertaining to us.
6. The sin of receiving the holy Sacraments in a careless way, with distractions and other irreverences, and without a serious preparation.
7. Impatience, resentment, any failure to accept disappointments as coming from God's Hand; for this puts obstacles in the way of the decrees and dispositions of Divine Providence concerning us.
8. The sin of giving ourselves an occasion that can even remotely blemish a spotless condition of holy purity.
9. The fault of advertently hiding from those who ought to learn them, one's bad inclinations, weaknesses, and mortifications, seeking to pursue the road of virtue not under the direction of obedience, but under the guidance of one's own whims.

Note: This speaks of times when we might have worthy direction if we seek it, but we prefer to follow our own dim lights.

Prayer for a Good Confession

O my God, by my grievous sins I have crucified again Thy Divine Son and made Him a mockery. For this I have deserved Thy wrath and made myself fit for the fires of hell. How ungrateful have I been to Thee as well, my heavenly Father, Who created me out of nothing, redeemed me by the precious Blood of Thy Son and sanctified me by Thy holy sacraments and by the Holy Ghost. But Thou hast spared me by Thy mercy, to make this confession. Receive me back as Thy prodigal son and grant me to confess well, that I may begin anew to love Thee with my whole heart and soul, and henceforth to keep Thy commandments and suffer patiently whatever temporal punishment may remain. I hope by Thy goodness and power to obtain everlasting life in Paradise. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

A Final Note

Remember to confess your sins with supernatural sorrow as well as a firm resolution not to sin again, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Ask your confessor to help you with any difficulties you have in making a good confession. Say your penance promptly.

An Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee. And I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of hell, 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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen

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