A Detailed Catholic Examination of Conscience

A good Catholic examination of conscience can be a great help in making a new start in the life of faith.

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 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.

To make an examination:

- Set aside some quiet time for reflection.
- Start by praying to the Holy Spirit, asking for help in making a good examination to prepare for Confession.
- Read through the items on this list and honestly reflect on your behavior for each item.
- If necessary, take this list or some brief notes (keep them private!) to Confession to help you remember things.

A Catholic examination of conscience traditionally follows the outline of the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Catholic Church.

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 (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? (Incl. horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc.)
- Been involved in the occult? (Seances, ouija board, worship of Satan, etc.)
- Formally left the Catholic Church?
- Hidden 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 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 a sacrament while in the state of mortal sin?
- Habitually come late to and/or leave early from Mass without a good reason?
- Shop, labor, 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

Honor 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 an another person?
- Unjustly threatened another person with bodily harm?
- Verbally or emotionally abused another person?
- Hated another person, or wished him evil?
- Been prejudiced, or unjustly discriminated against others because of their race, color, nationality, sex 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, quarreled 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 neighbor'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?
- 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 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 when neither of us is 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?

- 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 neighbor's goods.

Have I...

- Stolen? (Take 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 works of mercy?
- 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 honor 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 neighbor.

Have I...

- Lied?
- Knowingly and willfully deceived another?
- Perjured myself under oath?
- Gossiped?
- Committed detraction? (Destroying 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?

The Precepts of the Church

First Precept of the Church

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

Second Precept of the Church

You shall confess your sins at least once a year.

Have I...

- Made a good Confession of my mortal sins 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 of the Church

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 of the Church

You shall keep holy the Holy days of Obligation.

Fifth Precept of the Church

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 spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and practicing self-denial?

Sixth Precept of the Church

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 of the Church

You shall observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

Have I...

- Been living in a valid and licit 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?

This detailed Catholic examination of conscience should help you reflect on how you are responding to the demands made by the love of God.