Examination of Conscience

Mortal Sins*

This examination of conscience is not intended merely as a checklist to be used prior to confession. The purpose of this examination is to help souls to know what actions or attitudes are sinful and the gravity of the particular sin. The hope is that this knowledge will serve to keep people from committing these sins.

* Three things are necessary for a sin to be mortal: 1. Serious matter (things listed on this sheet); 2. Knowledge or firm belief that the act is seriously wrong prior to committing the act; 3. Full consent of the will.
All three of these conditions must be present simultaneously for a sin to be mortal. This means that if you did not know the act was seriously wrong, then you are not guilty of having committed a mortal sin. If you did not will the act, e.g., if you were forced or if it was in a dream, you are not guilty of having committed a mortal sin. All mortal sins committed since your last confession must be confessed by both type and number, i.e., the title of the sin and how many times it was done. If there is a mortal sin from the past that was forgotten and has not been confessed, it should be confessed at your next confession. It is not necessary to confess venial sins, but it is a good and pious practice.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.
- Involvement in occult practices, e.g., witchcraft, ouija boards, seances, palm reading, tarot cards, hypnotism, divination, astrology, black magic, sorcery, etc.
- Involvement in or adherence to New Age or Eastern philosophies, atheism or agnosticism
- Apostasy (leaving the Church)
- Adherence to a schismatic group
- Putting faith in superstition, e.g., horoscopes, good luck charms, etc.
- Joining the Masons or other secret society
- Receiving Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin
- Receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation or Matrimony while in the state of mortal sin
- Willful participation in illicit (non-emergency) "General Absolution" services
- Being married by a Justice of the Peace or by a minister of another denomination (without dispensation)
- Involvement in false or pagan worship
- Willfully denying the Faith of the Catholic Church
- Despair of God's grace or mercy
- Presumption (committing a mortal sin with the idea that you can just go to confession)
- Hatred of God
- Simony (buying or selling spiritual things)
- Failure to receive Holy Communion at least once per year (if possible, during the Easter Season)
- Desecration of the Holy Eucharist

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- Using God's name intentionally as a curse
- Seriously wishing evil upon another
- Serious slander or insult of a sacred person or object
- Making an oath in a secret society
- Telling a lie or withholding a serious sin in confession
- Blasphemy (words of hatred, reproach or defiance toward God; speaking ill of God)
- Perjury (lying under oath)
- Swearing false oaths

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
- Missing Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation without a serious reason
- Doing unnecessary work on Sunday for a long period of time, i.e., more than several hours
- Intentional failure to fast or abstain on appointed days
- Requiring employees to work on Sunday in non-essential occupations

4. Honor your father and mother.
- Serious failure to care for aged parents
- Serious neglect of the duties of one's state in life
- Serious disrespect for or disobedience to parents, superiors or authorities
- Wishing death or evil on parents
- Abuse or serious neglect of children
- Failure to baptize children in a reasonable time (within a few months) after birth
- Serious neglect of the religious education or upbringing of children
- Failure to carry out the last will of deceased parents

5. You shall not kill.
- Murder, homicide or manslaughter
- Procurement of an abortion
- Promoting, counseling or paying for an abortion
- Knowingly voting for someone who is pro-abortion
- Willfully injuring or trying to hurt another person
- Willfully leading another into serious sin
- Driving dangerously or recklessly
- Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Willfully harboring hatred for another
- Taking or selling illegal drugs
- Willful drunkenness
- Self mutilation
- Excessive tattoos
- Excessive body piercing
- Piercing of the nipples or sexual organs
- Sterilization
- Promotion of or involvement in euthanasia
- Serious entertainment of suicidal thoughts

- Attempting or intending suicide
- Willful failure to bury the body or ashes of the dead
- Willful engagement in unjust lawsuits
- Bigotry (hatred for persons of other races)
- Intentionally placing temptation before the weak

6. You shall not commit adultery.
- Adultery
- Fornication (intercourse prior to marriage)
- Masturbation or other impure acts with self
- Homosexual acts
- Using a contraceptive
- Dressing or acting in a manner intended to cause arousal in another (spouses excepted)
- Kissing or touching another passionately for the purpose of arousal (spouses excepted)
- Allowing another to kiss or touch you in a sexual manner (spouses excepted)
- Intentionally causing a sexual climax outside of intercourse
- Onanism, i.e. intentional withdrawal and non-vaginal ejaculation
- Flagrant immodesty in dress
- Bestiality (sexual acts with animals)
- Oral Sex (oral stimulation permitted as foreplay in marriage - ejaculation must be vaginal)
- Anal sex or other degrading sex practices
- Prostitution
- Rape
- In-vitro fertilization or artificial insemination
- Surrogate motherhood
- "Selective reduction" of babies in the womb
- Types of fertility testing that involve immoral acts
- Involvement in or support of human cloning
- Willful divorce or desertion
- Incest
- Polygamy or polyandry (many wives/husbands)
- Cohabitation prior to marriage
- Destroying the innocence of another by seducing or introducing them to immorality
- Lust in the heart ("if I could I would")
- "Swinging" or wife swapping
- Transvestitism or cross dressing

7. You shall not steal.
- Stealing a large amount of money or a valuable item
- Willfully destroying or defacing another's property
- Stealing something consecrated to God or from a holy place
- Buying, selling, receiving or concealing items known to be stolen
- Willful failure to make restitution
- Excessive gambling
- Defrauding workers of their wages

- Serious failure to fulfill work requirements
- Padding expense or per diem accounts
- Taking advantage of the poor, simple, inexperienced or less fortunate
- Denying help to the poor, needy or destitute when able to help them easily
- Defrauding creditors
- Bribery or taking bribes
- Blackmail
- Fraud or embezzlement
- Price fixing
- Tax evasion
- Forgery
- Excessive waste or expense
- Violating copyrights
- Pirating computer software
- Slavery
- Serious cruelty to animals

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- False witness (not under oath) or perjury (under oath)
-Telling large or premeditated lies
- Serious gossip, detraction (revealing the faults of another without serious reason), or calumny (harming the reputation of another by falsities)
- Violation of a confidence without good reason
- Being an accomplice to another's grave sin

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
- Viewing pornography in books, magazines, movies, the internet, etc.
- Reading sexually explicit materials
- Dwelling on impure thoughts or fantasies for the purpose of arousal
- Willfully lusting after another

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.
- Serious and willful greed or avarice
- Intention to steal or destroy the goods of another

Venial Sins and Imperfections*

* Imperfections are not sins so they do not need to be confessed. No distinction is made on this sheet between venial sins and imperfections because it is not always easy to make the distinction. Some things are imperfections because they are very small, other things are imperfections because they are dispositions of the soul and not willful actions or failures, still others because they are habitual.

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.
- Failure to pray on a daily basis
- Not trying to love God with my whole mind, heart, soul and strength

- Trying to control things rather than seek God's will
- Entertaining doubts against the Faith
- Failing to seek out or learn the teachings of the Church
- Indifference or ingratitude to God
- Lukewarmness in the relationship with God
- Not trying to grow spiritually; being content with mediocrity
- Acedia (spiritual sloth)
- Putting other things or people before God, e.g., TV, radio, sports, hobbies, etc.
- Attachment to human respect or affection, i.e., caring more about what others think than what God thinks in order to fit in or be liked
- Not trusting God
- Failure to fulfill the duties of one's state in life
- Playing Dungeons and Dragons or similar games
- Tempting God
- Being angry at God
- Embarrassment of being Catholic
- Failure to defend the Church when ridiculed
- Failure to support the work of the Church monetarily and/or with time and ability
- Not taking part in the work of evangelization
- Being willfully distracted at Mass or in prayer
- Putting off confession needlessly
- Failing to accept or offer up suffering
- Refusing or denying the mercy of God
- Not trying to practice recollection or the frequent remembrance of God's presence
- Failure to pray when tempted
- Failure to examine one's conscience daily
- Giving into depression, self pity or self deprecating thoughts

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- Using the Lord's name lightly, in surprise or in anger (habitual, not thinking)
- Cursing thoughtlessly
- Using the names of Mary, a Saint, the Pope or other sacred persons irreverently
- Using vulgar or inappropriate language
- Telling bad jokes about sacred persons or objects
- Speaking badly of the Church
- Inappropriate or irreverent use of Scripture

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
- Doing unnecessary work on Sunday
- Failing to keep Sunday as a day for family and recreation
- Failing to spend extra time on Sunday in prayer and study of the Faith
- Allowing sports or other schedules to dictate the Sunday schedule
- Being irreverent in church
- Not paying attention or participating at Mass
- Coming late to Mass or leaving early without a serious reason

- Desecrating the day by sinful amusements, bad company, inappropriate entertainment, etc.

4. Honor your father and mother.
- Fighting with siblings
- Disobedience to parents or authorities
- Failure to give proper respect to parents or those in authority
- Treating those under one's authority disrespectfully
- Failure to respect the dignity of children
- Speaking badly about parents
- Speaking badly about children
- Speaking badly about one's spouse
- Neglecting duties toward spouse or children
- Failing to give good example to one's family
- Not trying to cultivate peace in the family
- Taking one's spouse for granted
- Making fun of or failing to help the elderly or handicapped
- Not praying for those entrusted to your care
- Failing to pray for those in authority over you, e.g., parents, teachers, employers, government officials, etc.
- Failure to teach children adequately about God and the spiritual life
- Lack of gratitude toward parents
- Nagging spouse or children
- Treating adult children like minors
- Meddling in the affairs of married children
- Too lax with rules, boundaries and discipline
- Too strict with rules, boundaries and discipline
- Breaking just civil laws without serious reason
- Being ashamed of or embarrassed about parents

5. You shall not kill.
- Pride, arrogance
- Vanity
- Stubbornness without good reason
- Rudeness
- Failure to apologize
- Fighting or arguing over slight matters
- Anger
- Using obscene or vulgar gestures
- Prejudice
- Harboring a grudge
- Seeking revenge or retaliation
- Wishing evil upon another
- Impatience
- Selfishness
- Listening to bad music

- Excessive watching of television
- Excessive playing of computer games
- Excessive use of the internet
- Watching TV or movies that promote sex or violence
- Playing computer games that promote sex or violence
- Refusing to forgive another
- Intemperance (overeating or drinking too much)
- Driving carelessly
- Failing to care for one's health
- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Abusing medications
- Sloth (laziness)
- Procrastination
- Lack of puncuality
- Failure to respect the dignity of self or others
- Giving scandal to another
- Treating another unjustly
- Failure to take medications if such are necessary
- Doing things willfully to anger others
- Violating friendships
- Failure to pray for deceased parents or relatives
- Using the "silent treatment" on others
- Failure to pray for sinners

6. You shall not commit adultery.
- Lack of custody of the eyes (looking inappropriately at others)
- Allowing the heart to stray from one's spouse
- Dressing somewhat immodestly
- Acting or carrying oneself immodestly
- Treating others as objects
- Failure to respect persons of the opposite sex
- Seeking wrongful attention from another
- Selfishness in marital intimacy
- Failure to be open to life without serious reason
- Keeping bad company

7. You shall not steal.
- Attachments to persons or things
- Theft of small or inexpensive items
- Willful Failure to return borrowed items
- Wasting time
- Failure to pay debts promptly
- Failing to practice charity or to help the poor
- Squandering money on needless things or pursuits
- Not keeping a promise

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- Lying
- Gossiping
- Spreading rumors or tale bearing
- Talking behind another's back
- Being negative, critical or uncharitable in thought regarding others
- Making rash judgments
- Being unjustly suspicious
- Failure to seek to restore the good name of another whom you have injured through speech
- Cheating in games, school work, etc.
- Speaking unkindly to or about others
- Exaggerating the truth
- Bragging or boasting
- Flattery
- Complaining, whining or attention seeking

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
- Telling or listening to impure or vulgar jokes or stories
- Brief entertainment of impure thoughts or fantasies
- Not trying to control the imagination
- Curiosity or playing with temptation
- Seeking out or looking at persons or pictures which are immodest

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.
- Envy (sadness or anger at the good fortune of another)
- Jealousy (desire for the goods of another)
- Greed
- Materialism
- Not trusting that God will provide for all material and spiritual needs
- Attachment to riches or material goods

How to go to Confession

1. The Priest will begin with the Sign of the Cross.

2. The Penitent begins by saying "Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been ____ (number of days, weeks, months, etc.) since my last confession. These are my sins".

3. Confess all mortal sins committed since your last confession by kind and number. You may also confess any venial sins.

4. At the end of your confession say these or similar words: "For these and all the sins of my life I am sorry."

5. The Priest may ask questions for clarification or give you some counsel on a point from your confession.

6. The Priest will give you a penance.

7. The Penitent makes an act of contrition in these or similar words: O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all of 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. Amen.

8. The Priest will give you absolution. (The words necessary for forgiveness are "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit").

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