

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

The Ten Commandments

I. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD: YOU SHALL NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

Do I truly love God above all things, or are my real priorities elsewhere: money, material things, relationships, success, or selfish desires? Am I reverent in my speech and actions? Do I make fun of religion or of the Church? Do I give financial support to performers who blaspheme or commit sacrilege as a form of entertainment? Have I dabbled in the occult? Do I turn to God in prayer? Do I pray on a regular basis or is it only when I want something from God? Do I sincerely seek to be transformed by the will of God (see Romans 12:1-3), or do I merely practice my religion out of habit, or to maintain my social image, to satisfy my parents or friends, or to avoid being hassled? Am I fulfilling my duties as a parent to educate my child(ren) in the faith? Am I at all resentful of the demands my faith places upon me?

II. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

Do I show disrespect for God's name by misusing it, either to shock other people or in order to express frustration or anger? Do I, on the other hand, hesitate to use God's name in appropriate situations: in conversations with friends, relatives, fellow students, or co-workers? Do I try to deepen my understanding of the faith and take advantage of opportunities to grow in my faith? Do my own personal reflections, my reading, and my conversations with others, reflect a sincere desire to know and to follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

III. REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

Do I come to Church to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days? Do I neglect my Sunday Mass obligation because of laziness or because I give primary value to other weekend activities? Are my family members unable to attend Mass because of my neglect? Do I attend Mass only when it is convenient or when it will make me feel good? When I am at Mass, do I participate by praying and singing—or am I there as a spectator waiting to be entertained? Do I listen wholeheartedly to the Word of God and allow that Word to influence my life? Do I acknowledge the true presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist and receive Holy Communion with respect and reverence? Have I received Holy Communion when I was not properly disposed to do so (not being in the state of grace, or not having fasted)? Have I received communion in a non-catholic community? Do I show disrespect when I come to church by dressing improperly, chewing gum, arriving late, or by talking during Mass?

IV. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

Do I contribute to the peace and happiness of my family? Am I rather a source of hurt and division for those who are closest to me? *Parents:* Am I generous and patient with my child(en)? Do we spend enough time with them and give them the attention they need? Do we set limits and make sure that they follow rules that will help them to grow up into responsible adults? Do we maintain a constant prayer life in our home? Would a stranger recognize our family as Christian by the way we treat one another at home? *Children:* Am I loving, respectful, and obedient toward my parents? Do I appreciate the many sacrifices they make for me? Do I say, "Thank you," and, "I love you," often enough? Do I do my chores without being asked, or do I wait until my mother or father becomes upset before I move away from what I am doing? Do I treat my brothers and sisters with love and respect? Do I share my time, attention, and belongings with them?

V. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

Have I done bodily harm to another person? Am I responsible for the death or injury of another person as a result of my willful choice or neglect? Have I ever placed my life or the life of another person in danger because of a reckless use of alcohol or drugs, especially by driving under the influence or by riding with someone else who was? Do I use my influence to protect the rights of others, especially those whose lives are threatened? Am I mindful of the rights of those who are unable to protect themselves or whose cries for justice go unheard (see Luke 10:29-37)? Do racial prejudice or political ideology determine which persons are worthy of my respect and concern? Do I take my voting rights seriously and do I exercise my duty as a citizen to oppose grave offenses against life? Do I allow evil to continue because of my apathy or silence? Do I have a true concern for the plight of the homeless, the hungry, the sick, the alien and the refugee (cf. Mt. 25:31-46)? Do I put my concern into action—or do I give my attention to other matters? Am I violent or abusive with

anyone, either in action or in speech? Have I endangered my health or my relationships through abuse of drugs or alcohol, through neglect, or through recklessness?

VI. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

Do I respect the dignity of the human body and the sanctity of Christian marriage? Does my speech reflect that respect, or are coarse language and jokes a part of my conversations? Do I understand and appreciate the gift and purpose of my sexuality? Have I been faithful to my marriage, priestly, or religious vows? Do I seek to nourish myself in my lifetime commitment? Have I dishonored my body in any way—by fornication, impure actions either alone or with others, unworthy thought or suggestive conversation? Have I willfully separated the unitive and procreative aspects of marriage through recourse to contraception or *in vitro* fertilization? Have I encouraged others to sin by my failure to maintain good moral standards? Have I strengthened the commercial power of evil by purchasing or reading pornographic material, watching dirty movies, listening to music with degrading lyrics, or by renting pornographic video cassettes or cable television or computer on-line services?

VII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

Do I respect the property of other people? Have I stolen or willfully damaged the property of others (example, vandalism)? Have I cheated at work or in school? Have I stolen copyrighted materials by electronic means? Have I engaged in unfair business practices? Have I closed my eyes to theft, cheating, or other injustices around me in order to avoid conflict with my friends or co-workers? Am I honest and hardworking in my job? Do I pay a fair wage to my employees? Am I mindful of my obligations to the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, the naked, and the strangers in our midst (see Matthew 25:31-46)? Do I practice the works of justice, charity, and mercy (see James 2:14-26)? Do I share what I have with the poor? Can I be trusted? Have I ever cheated another person or institution? Do I support the life and mission of my parish by responsible stewardship, sharing my time, talent, and treasure? Do I participate in a life of Christian service and witness, or do I merely remain on the sidelines and complain about the flaws I can detect in others who are involved in the Church's mission.

VIII. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

Have I lied to another person, even if it was to avoid a difficult situation or stay out of trouble? Have I gossiped about another person? Have I damaged the reputation of another person by my gossip, even if the facts I revealed were true? Do I contribute to the commercial success of those who make a career of destroying the reputation of others (examples: certain newspapers, tabloids, or television shows)? Do I respect the privacy of others? Do I defend the rights of those who are unjustly accused or who are the victims of gossip? Am I merely a conduit through which rumors pass—whether or not they are true?

IX. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

Have I ever weakened or damaged my marriage commitment because of an interest in, or even obsession with another person? Do I respect others in their commitments and help them to remain true to their promises? Do I ever treat marriage casually in my conversations or attitudes? Do I engage in excessive or unjust criticism of my spouse? Do I insult and hurt my spouse by comparing him/her to others in an unflattering way? Am I grateful to God for the blessings that have come to me through my marriage? Have I ever done anything that made a mockery of my vows? Have I encouraged others to forsake their marriage vows (even if there was no romantic involvement on my part)?

X. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

Am I satisfied with the blessings God has bestowed upon me and my family? Do I give attention and energy to my work or some recreation to the detriment of my family life? Am I jealous or resentful of others who are seemingly better-off than I? Do I try to prove that I am better than others by bragging about my possessions or by accumulating more things to show off to others? Do I appreciate my own good qualities, or do I constantly compare myself with other people and then give in to resentment and bitterness? Do I cope well with the problems that confront me in life? Do I maintain my Christian hope in spite of trials or difficulties? Do I truly seek first the Kingdom of God in my life and place my trust in Him (see Matthew 6: 19-34)? Do I reflect the peace, hope, and joy of a person redeemed and made holy by the blood of Christ?

SAINT PAUL ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Unity in the Body. I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. *Ephesians 4:1-5*

Renewal in Christ. So I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance, because of their hardness of heart, they have become callous and have handed themselves over to licentiousness for the practice of every kind of impurity to excess. That is not what you learned when you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard of him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, that you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth. *Ephesians 4:17-24*

Rules of the New Life. Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil. The thief must no longer steal, but rather labor, doing honest work with his [own] hands, so that he may have something to share with one in need. No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. *Ephesians 4:17-32*

Life as a Child of God. So be imitators of God as his beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma. Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones, no obscenity or silly or suggestive talk, which is out of place, but instead, thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person, that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. *Ephesians 5:1-5*

Duty to Live in the Light. Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. So do not be associated with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Ephesians 5:6-20*

Life in the Spirit. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another. *Galatians 5:16-26*