

QUESTIONS FOR AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Based on the Seven Capital Sins

Gluttony

- Do I acknowledge that my body and soul are gifts from God? Do I acknowledge that both are good and have their place in God's plan for my life?
- Do I let my emotions and physical drives direct my actions and my priorities?
- Do I take care of my body and my physical health? Do I exercise as I should? Do I try to follow good nutritional practices and avoid harmful foods and substances?
- Do I avoid risky behavior that puts my health or other's health in jeopardy?
- Do I spend too much time and energy worried about my appearance? Do I spend money on things (clothing, exercise equipment, cosmetics, etc.) that I should be using to fulfill my other responsibilities?
- Do I put my health and my free will at risk by abusing prescription or illegal drugs?
- Do I put my health and my free will at risk by drinking alcohol immoderately? If I know I cannot drink in moderation, do I abstain from alcohol as I should?
- Do I put my health at risk by smoking? If I am addicted to smoking, have I taken reasonable steps to overcome this addiction?
- Do I eat mindlessly between meals? Do I remember to thank God for the food and drink I have before and after meals?
- Do I eat too much food—more than I need or more than is healthy for my physical condition? Do I eat too much and become lazy as a result?
- Do I try to share the food and drink I have with others? Do I show hospitality to those whom God sends my way?
- Am I overly picky or demanding about my food? Do I send things back or complain about food in order to draw attention to myself?
- Am I content with "regular" food, or do I always want the best? Do I spend too much money on rich foods and nice restaurants, money that I should be using for other responsibilities?
- Do I observe the Church's regulations regarding fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and abstinence from meat on the Fridays of Lent? Do I make an effort to abstain from meat on the Fridays of the year, or to offer some other form of penance instead? Do I look for ways to make other voluntary sacrifices regarding food and drink?
- Am I careful to look for ways to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, or do I figure that it is someone else's responsibility?

Lust

- Do I acknowledge that my bodily and spiritual identity as a man or a woman is a gift from God? Do I seek to understand sexuality and sexual morality from the perspective of God's plan?
- Do I acknowledge that the Church has a right to teach in God's name about even the most private aspects of my life and relationships? Have I made reasonable efforts to understand Church teachings and to learn ways to be faithful to them?
- Do I let my sexual drives control my behavior and my attitudes? Do I practice self-control and avoid people, places and things that are occasions of sin?
- Am I careful to keep my emotions and imagination under control? Do I keep myself from looking lustfully at other people?
- Do I avoid solitary sexual acts like viewing pornography and masturbation? If I struggle with them, am I honest about them in confession, or do I hide or gloss over them? Have I made reasonable efforts to get help in overcoming these habits through regular confession and spiritual direction?
- Am I chaste in my thoughts about and relationships with the people I date? Have I identified appropriate boundaries in my behavior, and been honest with the person I am dating about how far is too far? Have I been faithful to these boundaries, and encouraged the person I am dating also to be faithful to them? Have I accepted correction from that person if I have been tempted to step over the line?
- Have I engaged in activities that were deliberately arousing with a person who is not my spouse? Have I engaged in sexual acts of any kind with a person who is not my spouse? Have I been honest and specific about this in confession, or have I hidden or glossed over them?
- Have I committed adultery? Have I engaged in more serious sexual sins involving prostitution, rape, or abuse?
- If I am married, have I engaged in sexual acts that were not open to the transmission of new life, either because of the nature of the acts themselves, or because they involved the use of contraception? Have I made reasonable efforts to understand the Church's teaching on the regulation of conception, and the science and the morality of Natural Family Planning? Have I tried to submit my intellect and will to the teaching of the Church on these matters?
- Am I patient and gentle with my spouse in regard to our sexual relationship? Do I avoid objectifying my spouse and try instead to make all aspects of our relationship an opportunity for mutual self-giving? Do I use our sexual relationship as a way to obtain or wield power in the relationship? Am I attentive to showing affection and developing intimacy in all aspects of our married life, not just the physical?

Avarice (Greed)

- Do I acknowledge that the material world and everything in it has its ultimate source in God? Am I grateful for the blessings and gifts I have received from him?
- Do I acknowledge that I am part of the human family, as well as part of my nation, community, and family, and work to establish and maintain solidarity in my

relationships? Do I look out for the needs of the poor, the vulnerable and the outcast, and try to share my time, talent, and material goods with them?

- Do I let my economic situation and advantages influence my relationships with others? Do I lord it over those who have less than I do? Do I resent (openly or secretly) those who have more than I do? Do I blame my economic situation for things that are really the fault of my own laziness or selfishness?
- Do I make good efforts to develop the talents and abilities with which God has blessed me, and to put them to good use? Do I offer my services for the good of my family, community, nation, Church?
- Do I desire to accumulate goods or money for the sake of having more than others? Do I use shopping, collecting or organizing my things distract me from emotional or interpersonal hurts or struggles that I should be addressing? Do I spend money on comforts or things that I should be using to fulfill my personal and family responsibilities?
- Do I desire to accumulate and increase money for the sake of having power over others or over the future? Do I refuse to give to others because I am afraid of not having enough to cover situations that will probably never happen?
- Do I save responsibly for the sake of my own and my family's needs? Do I spend frivolously or accumulate large debts needlessly? Do I gamble with money that I should use for my personal and family responsibilities?
- Am I honest at work? Do I fulfill my responsibilities justly? Do I use things that belong to the shop or business for my own personal uses? Do I steal money or property from work? Do I waste time or conduct personal business or phone calls when I should be working?
- If I am an employer, do I provide my employees with a just wage, and seek to provide appropriate benefits for them and their families? Do I take advantage of the poor or marginalized, and force them into agreements that are unjust?
- Have I stolen anything? Have I confessed this, or hidden or glossed over it in confession? Have I made restitution for what I have stolen, either by returning it to the person or institution from which I stole it, or by giving a comparable amount to the poor?
- Have I been honest in paying my taxes? Do I contribute to social security programs, and take only what I need and am entitled to?
- Do I pay my just debts? Do I pay them on time?
- Do I make decisions about my job or professional path based on all of my responsibilities and my vocation, or do money and status become the only situation? Do I involve my spouse and (when appropriate) my children in making these decisions?
- Have I made appropriate efforts to learn and understand the Church's teaching about social justice? Have I tried to accept this teaching and let it influence the way I work, conduct business, and vote?

Anger

- Do I acknowledge the power and wisdom of God? Do I acknowledge God's exclusive right to judge right and wrong and condemn bad actions, or do I appropriate this right to myself? Am I quick to judge others?

- Do I show mercy to those who have offended me? Do I try to understand the situation of others and think well of them? Do I assume good motives or bad motives from most people? Do I strive to forgive all those who have offended me, especially those closest to me?
- Do I restrict my willingness to show mercy, putting time constraints on people or refusing to forgive after a certain number of repeat offenses? Do I insist on apologies from others, or do I try to understand how I might also have offended them?
- Am I quick to seek forgiveness from others when I have offended them? Do I always make excuses for myself, or do I take responsibility for my actions? Am I willing to do concrete things to show the genuineness of my sorrow?
- Do I let feelings of hurt or anger linger in my mind and heart? Do I hold grudges against people for past offenses?
- Do I translate other feelings—fear, shame, loneliness, grief, insecurity, etc.—into anger and take this anger out on other people?
- Do I vent my frustration on animals or on inanimate objects? Do I drive recklessly because I am impatient?
- Do I harbor feelings of anger against others? Do I desire that someone who has offended me should suffer physically or emotionally? Do I wish ill on others? Do I desire to kill someone else, or that they should die from illness or injury?
- Have I ever deliberately taken an innocent human life? Have I ever been involved in an abortion, or pressured someone to obtain an abortion? Have I ever been involved in euthanasia, by doing something or omitting something for the purpose of ending someone's life?
- If I am or have been a soldier or police officer, have I been just in my use of force, especially deadly force? Have I acted proportionately and only inflicted harm in self-defense?
- Have I assaulted or abused anyone physically or emotionally? Have I sought to make restitution and amends for the injury I have caused?
- Have I harmed my own body or put my health or safety at risk by mutilating my body or taking deliberate and unnecessary risks?

Acedia (Sloth)

- Do I acknowledge God's providence in my life? Am I grateful to God for the opportunity he gives me to cooperate with him in working out my own salvation?
- Do I acknowledge the importance of rest, and of contemplating the goodness of God's creating and saving work? Do I strive to keep Sunday holy by avoiding unnecessary servile work, and by developing my relationships with God, the Church, my community, my family and my friends?
- Do I seek to understand God's will for me in terms of my vocation and my career? Have I made reasonable efforts to find employment that will allow me to serve God, the Church and the community, and to fulfill my personal and family responsibilities?
- Do I work for justice and equity in the way that I conduct myself at work? Am I a good example to my coworkers, especially those who know I am a Christian and a Catholic?

- Do I acknowledge God's mercy and love? Do I strive to be faithful to him, even when it seems he has forgotten about me?
- Do I try to be still, and to create a reflective atmosphere in my life and in my home? Do I make time in my day for prayer, reflection and spiritual reading?
- Do I fulfill my responsibilities on time and conscientiously? Do I waste time at work or at home on the Internet, watching television, or in frivolous or harmful activities? Do I use any of these things—or even my work—to avoid dealing with family, friends, or my own moral or emotional issues?
- Do I fill up my time with conversations that are meaningless or harmful? Do I spend time in calumny by spreading lies about other people? Do I commit detraction by telling personal information about someone to others who have no right to that information? Do I encourage others to gossip by asking for information, by passing it along, or by my silence?
- Do I try to be patient with distractions during prayer, and acknowledge my need for God's help to overcome them? Do I take the time to calm my mind and heart before prayer in order to minimize distractions?
- Do I look for ways to be of service to others, especially those most in need?
- Do I acknowledge that the only place I will ever be completely happy is in Heaven? Do I make every effort in order to go there when I die? Do I strive to remain faithful to God in the midst of adversity and suffering?

Envy

- Do I acknowledge God's providential care and fatherly love? Do I believe that he has the right to decide what people need and to distribute his blessings and gifts in the way that he knows is best? Do I rely on him for what I need to do his will, and try not to compare my situation with others?
- Do I trust God's fairness and love even when others seem to benefit while I am suffering? Am I able to call on God even when it seems he is far from me? Do I see him as the source of good, or as one who constantly restricts me from doing what I want?
- Do I covet the material goods of others? Do I scheme and desire to acquire them, even at the expense of others? Would I steal them if I had the opportunity? Do I wish harm or ill on another simply because he or she has something that I do not?
- Am I possessive of other people? Am I jealous when someone gives attention or affection to someone other than me? Do I take an inordinate interest in people I used to or wanted to date, and in what they do and whom they see? Do I work to undermine other people's relationships or marriages because I am jealous or possessive of someone?
- Am I jealous of other people's intellectual or spiritual gifts? Do I resent others because they seem to have life easier than I do, because they seem to relate to people or understand things with less difficulty than me? Do I compare my spiritual progress with others who I assume have a deeper spiritual life than I do?
- Am I jealous of those who seem to get away with doing wrong, when I struggle to do good? Do I let other people's bad behavior become an excuse for not struggling to be holy myself? Do I become content with being just as bad as everyone else, as long as I am no worse?

- Do I strive to be humble, and to put myself at the service of others? Am I attentive to their needs, and try to anticipate them? Am I patronizing toward those who need my help?
- Do I try to congratulate others for their achievements, and really take joy in the good that belongs to another? Do I pray for others to succeed?
- Do I strive to be content with what God has given me, in terms of my material, physical, spiritual and emotional gifts? Do I remember to consider my gifts each day and to turn to God with a grateful heart?

Pride

- Do I acknowledge the goodness of God, and strive to obey his will? Do I take every opportunity to listen to his Word, especially in the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, and the liturgy?
- Do I strive to understand and to accept the teachings of the Church? When I find something difficult to understand, am I willing to submit my intellect and will, and try to believe it and to act accordingly? Do I set limits on what I will accept, or how long I will spend trying to understand something?
- Have I deliberately rejected some explicit teaching of the Church? Have I led others to do the same, either by my words or by my silence? Have I taught the faith authentically to my children and to others for whom I am responsible, by my actions and attitudes as well as my words?
- Am I willing to ask questions of my parish priest and other teachers in the Church, and to participate in programs designed for catechesis and adult faith formation? Am I willing to keep asking, even when I am embarrassed? Do I pray for enlightenment from the Lord when I am in doubt? Do I really believe that he will answer this prayer?
- Do I do things—even good things—in order to be noticed and praised by others? Do I avoid doing things I ought to do because I am afraid of the criticism of others?
- Am I too sensitive to the words of others? Do I hold grudges and harbor anger or resentment when someone is unkind to me? Do I repeat these things to third parties in order to receive consolation and reassurance, or to make the other person look bad?
- Do I humiliate my neighbor by my words or actions? Do I show off with my talents or knowledge? Do I ask unfair questions of others to make them look less intelligent than myself? Do I put unreasonable demands on others to do things I know they cannot do, so that they will look bad, or so that I can come to the rescue and look good.
- Do I pray with a humble heart, and acknowledge my unworthiness and helplessness apart from God. Do I seek to know and to do God's will, or are my prayers mostly me telling God what I am going to do for him? Do I seek to act according to God's plan and on God's time, or do I expect him to fit into my own schedule and agenda?
- Do I despair of God's mercy, and refuse to believe he could forgive my sins? Do I presume his mercy, and refuse to acknowledge that I need to repent?
- Do I put God's power and goodness to the test by asking for signs or unreasonable favors? Do I place deadlines on how long I will wait for God to answer my prayers?
- Am I cheerful and charitable towards others? Do I wear my emotions on my sleeve and expect others to ask me what is wrong? Do I use my emotions as a weapon to get what I want out of others?

The Spiritual Combat

- Do I make time for prayer every day? Do I ask God to teach me how to deepen my prayer? Do I allow time for listening to God, as well as speaking to him?
- Do I confess my sins at least once a year, as the Church requires? Have I made reasonable efforts to confess my sins more often?
- Do I confess my mortal sins specifically? Do I call them by their names and take responsibility for them, or have I hidden some mortal sins from my confessor? Do I include circumstances that would make the sin more grave, or do I try to minimize or gloss over my sins? Am I honest about how many times or how often I have committed these sins, especially those that have become habitual?
- Do I spend a reasonable amount of time and effort examining my conscience? Do I try to examine my conscience at the end of every day? Am I willing to confess even my venial sins as completely as possible?
- Do I acknowledge and accept God's mercy and forgiveness? Do I approach the sacrament of Reconciliation with a firm decision to change my life, or do I leave as if nothing is different?
- Have I considered coming to confession frequently, and making an effort to always come to the same priest for confession? Have I considered whether God is calling me to enter a relationship of spiritual direction?
- Am I always honest with my director, or do I conceal or brush off things that I find embarrassing or difficult to talk about? Am I consistent in making myself available for conversations with my director on a regular basis, or do I avoid direction when my struggles get more difficult, or when I have fallen? Do I change directors frequently in order to avoid difficult questions?
- Do I attend Mass every Sunday and holy day of obligation? Do I make an effort to receive Communion every time I attend Mass?
- Do I follow the teachings of the Church about receiving Holy Communion? Have I received Communion unworthily because I was in the state of mortal sin? Do I approach Confession frequently and try to avoid sin, in order to be able to receive Communion worthily? Do I follow the rules of the Church about fasting before Communion?
- Have I made reasonable efforts to attend Mass more frequently, even daily? Have I tried to make use of opportunities to worship Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament outside Mass (Eucharistic adoration, Benediction, processions)?
- Do I acknowledge every day my need for God's help? Do I believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the angels and saints can help me to live a holy life? Do I make time to read about their lives, and to develop relationships with them? Have I made reasonable efforts to make praying the Rosary or other devotions to Our Lady a part of my regular prayer routine?
- Do I pray for the Church and the Holy Father, for the diocese and my bishop, for the parish and my priests—especially my confessor(s) and spiritual director—for my family, friends, neighbors, and all those whom God has given me to help me to grow in holiness. Do I pray for my future spouse? Do I pray for the people God has called me to serve?
- Do I take joy in the fact that God has saved me from sin by the Passion and Resurrection of his Son? Do I let this joy transform my attitudes and my actions? Do I believe in the overwhelming love of God for every one of his children? Do I live like I believe it?