



## Make an Examination of Conscience Based on the 10 Commandments

*Warning: Do not give this to others because you think "they need it." This is for you!*

### YOU CAN LIVE A HOLY LIFE!

"What God commands He makes possible by grace," says paragraph 2083 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"Jesus says, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.' The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of His mysteries, and keep His commandments, the Savior Himself... becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity" (para. 2074).

In other words, it is only when we have a growing relationship with the Lord Jesus that we are empowered to live more and more the way God commands us to. Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit to help us obey the Father's commands.

God's laws were made for our benefit! Our obedience opens us to receive more of God: more of His love, His help, His comfort, His healing, etc. "The gift of the Commandments is the gift of God Himself" (para. 2059).

Any time we disobey God, we make our lives more difficult because we are turning away from love: "Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it" (para. 1850).

This is why it's important to make a good examination of conscience. Use this Examination of Conscience prayerfully. Make note of the sins you've committed as they come to mind. Then reflect on how these sins have opposed love. As soon as possible, confess them and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Keep in mind that once you've done this, you are set free from guilt and never need to confess these sins again — unless you recommit the same sins.



So forgive yourself, and depend on the supernatural power of the Sacrament to help you grow stronger in living a holy and loving life.

This Examination of Conscience is based on the Ten Commandments because, "Since they express man's fundamental duties toward God and towards his neighbor, the Ten Commandments reveal, in their primordial content, grave obligations. They are fundamentally immutable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them" (para. 2072).

Remember, it's impossible to convert from every sinful tendency all at once, no matter how much you desire it. Let God transform you, but be patient with yourself. Purifying yourself is a process — sometimes a very long process. God loves you right now, and so should you!

## Commandments for Loving God

### 1 You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not carve and worship idols.

- God is constant and unchangeable, faithful and just, without any evil. He is almighty, merciful and infinitely good, always acting for my benefit. Do I sometimes think or act as if He's not?
- Have I failed to love God unconditionally, without reservation or distrust? In what areas of my life is my faith in Him incomplete?
- When have I failed to acknowledge and accept His authority, and tried to do things my way?
- Have I neglected to do everything possible to nourish and protect my faith?
- Have I ignored the danger of listening to teachings that contradict the Church, such as those that are propagated through television, movies, books, magazines, newspapers, occult games, politicians and other people?
- Have I willingly doubted God, thus making my own wisdom to be my god?
- Is money and material possessions my god? They are, if I value them more than the people in my life, or if I spend more time focused on them than on my family and friends.
- What are the graven images I worship?
- Money? Do I trust my income to provide me with what I need, instead of truly trusting God and His timing? If I go into debt to buy something, I'm not trusting God.
- The television? Do I watch shows that are contrary to God's kingdom? If Jesus walked through my door, would I be able to invite Him to sit with me while I watch my programs?
- My furniture? If I prefer falling asleep in that plush chair or sofa when I should be tending to my family, reading spiritual books or meditating with the Bible, then this has become my god.
- Do I ever doubt God, rejecting what He's revealed to me, or rejecting what the Church has taught me to believe? If I do, I'm making a god out of myself, believing that I know better than God about what's best for me.
- Have I despaired? If so, I've decided not to wait on God's help. I'm worshiping my own ideas and my own time-table for how and when problems should get resolved.
- Do I think God cannot forgive my sins? Or someone else's? If so, I'm telling God how to run His kingdom!
- Do I think my good works alone will save me? That is the sin of presumption, and I'm fashioning my works into an idol. Only by allowing Jesus to change me from a sinner into a saint—via his suffering and death on the cross—can I be saved from the fires of eternal hell.
- Do I count on God's mercy so much that I expect Him to overlook my sins "because He understands"? This kind of god is one I've created to give myself permission to sin. The true God is merciful, yes, but His love cannot save me from the evil of my sinfulness unless I choose to turn away from it.
- Am I indifferent toward God and what He is asking of me? Am I ungrateful, spiritually lazy, or lukewarm in my faith? This is the sin of not loving Him with my whole heart.
- Have I failed to take time each day to pray, because it seems more important to spend my time on other activities?
- Am I unwilling to make sacrifices for God and for His Kingdom? This includes my money, time, possessions and talents. It also includes the fears, low self-esteem and pride that keeps me from saying "yes" to Him.
- Do I try to manipulate God by bargaining with Him? ("If you heal my daughter, I'll go to Mass every day.") If so, I'm trying to bribe Him. He doesn't want my bribe; He wants my trust in His ability to handle the problem the way He knows is best.
- Do I try to manipulate my life through superstitions (including religious ones), divination, magic, or other occult practices? If so, I'm not truly believing that God is loving enough and powerful enough to help me by His own means.
- Have I ever denied the Faith? Or followed teachings that disagree with Catholic Church teachings?

## 2 You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.



- Have I cursed? Do I use profane language?
- Do any of my words dishonor God?
- God's "name" means the fullness of Who He is: His personality, His love, His ways of doing things, etc. Have I ever refused to take Him seriously?
- Do I abuse Jesus' name by professing Him as my Lord and Savior while living as if I don't know Him?
- Have I gotten angry at God? Or wrestled with Him? It's healthy to admit and express my anger, but I should express my feelings and at the same time put my trust in Him.
- Have I failed to speak highly of God? When someone else offended God, did I stand up for Him?
- Do I believe He doesn't really care about me, my desires, and my problems? Of course He does care, but does my behavior show it?
- Do I cheat God by not giving Him everything He asks of me? When I'm not actively seeking new spiritual growth, I'm treating my faith lightly. This includes being too busy for prayer, the Bible, Church documents, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, ministry, etc.
- Have I abused the name of anyone whom God has honored, by not giving due veneration to that person? Have I used words to insult or hurt a sacred person? This includes our Blessed Mother, the Saints, and the people who live among us on this earth.
- God calls each of us by name, thus everyone's name is sacred. When have I mocked someone's name or altered it to degrade that person?
- Have I named God to justify sinful activity? For example, some people say, "God created homosexuals, therefore it's okay if they express their love through homosexual activity."
- When have I lied? God is truth, so I blaspheme Him when I utter even the smallest lie.
- Have I broken promises that I made in God's name? When I invoke God's faithfulness, then reject it, I'm making God out to be a liar.

## 3 Keep holy the Sabbath Day.

- Have I missed Mass through my own fault, on Sundays or on Holy Days?
- Have I allowed my children to miss Mass?
- Do I notice others missing Mass or working unnecessarily without lovingly reminding them to take time for God?
- Do I do work on the Lord's Day that could be handled later or that doesn't need to get done at all? This is supposed to be a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.
- Do I place extra burdens on other people on Sunday?
- Do I take for granted Jesus' true presence in the Eucharist, or do I disagree that the bread and wine actually become Jesus?
- During Mass, do I fail to reverence God by neglecting to genuflect or kneel? By wearing lewd clothing? By arriving late or leaving early without a holy reason? By speaking disrespectfully of or to others? By allowing myself to be easily distracted? By any other means?
- Am I transformed by Jesus when I receive Him in the Word and in the Eucharist, or do I leave Mass the same as I came in?
- Have I neglected my obligation to go to Confession at least once a year, but received Communion regardless?
- When have I failed to treat others as if they were Jesus Himself?
- I sanctify Sunday when I devote the time to my family and friends, and by using it for reflection and to cultivate my mind and spirit. When have I cheated my family, my friends and myself of this?
- Am I a workaholic, placing tasks above people, or a busy schedule above the need to relax? Am I unkind to myself by not balancing recreation with work?
- Do I choose to get involved in leisure activities that are violent, sinful, or unloving?
- Each day is a holy day, created by God for my benefit. When have I failed to make each moment a holy moment?

## Commandments for Loving Others

### 4 Honor your father and mother.

- As an adult whose parents are still alive, I'm not bound to obey them in the strict sense, but do I show them disrespect? Do I work against them?
- Have I dishonored my parents by saying unloving things about or to them? By insulting them? By arguing without trying to understand them?
- Have I failed to forgive them for everything that has hurt me?
- Have I refused to be generous with them, holding back my time or money?
- When did they experience difficulties and I neglected to provide emotional support?
- What about the other parents of my faith: godparents, pastors, catechists, teachers, siblings, friends, etc.? Have I failed to honor them, treat them well, and give them thanks?
- God designed my own marriage to be a sacramental, covenant community: When have I given my spouse less than the best of me? Our relationship should mutually benefit both of us: When have I been more concerned about myself?
- Is the procreation and education of children a low priority, taking a back seat to my career, possessions or other things of the world?
- Do I give my family members less devotion than my job, my leisure activities or my friends?
- Have my demands on children ever been unjust and unfair? Were they inappropriate for the children and for the family as a whole?
- Parents are the first image of God for their children. What have I done that creates a false image of God: distant, unforgiving, uncaring, abusive, undependable, giving love only as a reward, etc.?
- What have I done that has kept my home from being filled with forgiveness, fidelity and service to one another? For example, did I fail to help with chores, homework, or emotional needs? When did I set a poor example of forgiveness and understanding?
- Have I neglected my responsibility to bring prayer and scripture into my home? Or to take seriously the Christian family's role in evangelization and service?



PREVIEW

- Have I encouraged, by example and by what I've permitted, individualism over community life? I have, if I've allowed a television in every room or other activities that keep my family apart when it's not necessary.
- Have I taught my children, by my example, to be selfish, alcoholic, abusive, too busy for God or each other, liars, or money-worshippers? What other bad behaviors did they learn from me?
- If I have divorced or separated, have I disregarded Church teachings on the Sacrament and permanence of marriage? Have I forsaken the help offered by the Church for reconciliation or for getting an annulment? Have I refused to seek the forgiveness of my spouse for my hatred and anger? God wants me to both forgive and to seek forgiveness, even if my spouse and I remain apart.
- Have I neglected my children's religious education? Have I poorly encouraged participation in Mass or CCD? Have I ignored other opportunities to sponsor their spiritual growth? Have I relied on others to provide most of their training, instead of acknowledging my role as their primary educator?
- Have I failed to lead my children to frequent Confession?
- Have I discouraged in any way the possibility of my children being called to the priesthood or the consecrated religious life?
- How have I held my children back from becoming all that God has designed them to be, including in their self-esteem, talents, relationships with others, and their present or future careers?
- Am I so attached to my parents (or anyone) that they come before God in my life?
- How well do I honor and respect legitimate civil authorities? All authority to govern comes from God. Have I neglected to vote regularly? To pay my taxes honestly? To serve my country to the best of my ability?
- When civil authorities abuse their power, do I ignore it or complain about it, instead of working against this abuse and defending the truth of the Gospel?

## 5 You shall not kill.

- Have I had an abortion or helped someone else get one? When I knew someone was planning to get an abortion, was I too afraid or too unconcerned to do everything possible to protect the unborn child?
- Have I used artificial birth control? Have I been sterilized (or approved of my spouse's sterilization) to avoid having children? These may have killed God's plan for me. It also killed some of the intimacy between me and my spouse, because it means I was unwilling to give my spouse all of me, which means my fertility. Perhaps it has even caused spontaneous abortions of children who had already begun to live.
- By God's design, children are an expression of His love, created through our unitive act of loving sexual relations. If procreation is separated from the conjugal act, such as through in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination, we are going beyond the legitimate scope of medicine in assisting the process. Have I done this or encouraged someone else to do it?
- Have I been involved in the termination of a sick person's life, such as by agreeing to stop food and water? The Church teaches that the only time it is not sinful to help end a life is when the medical procedures for keeping someone alive would be extraordinary and there is no hope for recovery.
- When someone indicated that he or she approves of abortion or euthanasia, have I said nothing (which implies I agree) instead of speaking up for God's view?
- 1 John 3:15 says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer." Whom have I hated by being unloving toward them?
- Have I killed my own spirit with self-loathing?
- When have I killed someone's self-esteem or dreams or spirit through hurting him or her?
- When have I killed someone in my heart because he/she wouldn't do something my way?
- When have I tried to correct someone without showing compassion?
- When have I fought with someone? When I insist on winning an argument, it means I want the other person to lose.
- When have I killed a child's spirit or ability to trust me by punishing him or her too severely or by not showing forgiveness?
- When have I killed my friends by giving them less than what I could give them?

- When have I killed people by speaking unkindly about them or by gossiping or slandering?
- Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. When have I directly or indirectly tempted someone to sin, thereby killing them spiritually?
- Physical health is a gift entrusted to us by God. Do I smoke, take harmful drugs, drink too much alcohol, eat too much of the wrong foods, drive recklessly, or do anything that unnecessarily risks my life or shortens it?
- Have I ever encouraged someone else to do these things?
- Do I carry in me envy, rage, jealousy, or any other feeling that is unpeaceful? In other words, am I waging war within myself?
- Have I allowed the death of people by not getting involved when I could have provided financial or other help during times of murderous famines or war?
- What have I done that has contributed to the killing of this planet's environment, when I could have avoided it? What resources and skills have I neglected to use to protect the environment?

## 6 You shall not commit adultery.

- When have I cheated on God by loving myself or someone else more than I love Him?
- When have I cheated on God by putting my own desires ahead of His?
- Have I been lazy in my prayer time or Scripture study or other activities that would help my spiritual growth?
- God created me either male or female, and He does not make mistakes. Do I have difficulty accepting my sexual identity or the shape of the body He's given me?
- God created men and women to be equal in personal dignity. Have I degraded members of the opposite sex? Or of my own gender?
- When did I cheat on my spouse by behaving as if I'm more valuable or more worthy of attention than he or she is?

- Chastity in a sacramental marriage means that a husband and wife give themselves fully to each other for the rest of their lives. Have I chosen to keep any part of myself from my spouse, such as my sexuality, my fertility or my permanent commitment?
- Is my marriage only civil, and not sacramental? If so, I have rejected Christ from being part of the union, and therefore it is not a valid marriage in His or the Church's eyes.
- Has my relationship with my spouse (or any romantic relationships) failed to reflect to the world God's love? Has our marriage publicly set a poor example of commitment and unconditional union?
- If I'm divorced, did I sever what had been a civil agreement, made in full freedom, and originally intended to be lifelong? (It is not a sin if the separation was made for the good of the spouses and the children due to extreme and radical incompatibility, and if the agreement made on the wedding day was not made lovingly and in full freedom. Nor have I sinned if my spouse abandoned me due to his or her own irresponsibility without any desire for reconciliation.)
- Have I divorced and remarried civilly without obtaining an annulment? If so, I'm not validly married to the new spouse; in the eyes of God, I'm still married to my first spouse.
- Do I dislike or reject the idea of making a life-time commitment to my spouse? Have I been unable to make such a commitment, even though on my wedding day I professed to do it? If so, I'm being untrue to my partner, to myself, and to God.
- Have I committed fornication or adultery (sex outside of marriage)? This includes having sexual relations with my spouse before our wedding day, and remarriage without getting an annulment from the Church.
- Have I masturbated, which is having sex with myself instead of my spouse?
- Lust is a disordered desire for—or an inordinate enjoyment of—sexual pleasure for its own sake, isolated from the desire to give love to my spouse for procreative and unitive purposes. Have I had lustful thoughts? Sinful touches? Impure glances?
- Have I told any "dirty" jokes?
- When did I allow my passions to control me, instead of using self-control for love of others under the guidance of God? This concerns sexual conduct, but it also relates to anger, spending money, being ruled by fear or impatience, etc.
- Have I worn immodest clothing in public? Some people who saw me may have been sex addicts, and seeing me could have triggered their compulsion to go and act sinfully.
- Have I read pornographic books or magazines? Or watched movies or TV shows that contained sexual scenes or impure plots?
- Did I ever commit incest? Or have I abused anyone (including my spouse) by forcing intimate physical contact upon them?
- If I am or if I know a homosexual person, am I failing to encourage chastity, healing, and love's call to unite the difficulties of this condition to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross? Have I treated homosexuals without respect, compassion and sensitivity?

## 7 You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen any material goods? Did I realize my sin but fail to make restitution?
- When have I stolen time away from God by my spiritual laziness?
- When did I waste time at work, in school or at home?
- Am I stingy? For example, have I stolen cookies from my kids, perhaps hiding my favorite "stash" because I don't want to share them?
- Have I been stingy in my support of the Church and other worthy causes? Scripture tells us to give God our tithes (ten percent of our income) and offerings. Have I been fearful that if I give away that much, I won't have enough money to meet my needs and satisfy my desires? This means I'm not truly trusting God, I'm not obeying His Word, and I'm not acknowledging that everything I have comes from Him.
- Do I think that everything I own is only for my benefit, and do I assume that God did not give it to me for the good of others?
- What have I wasted money on while the Church, my neighbor or the destitute suffered from unmet needs?
- Have I stolen pens from work or tax money from the IRS? Have I made personal toll calls from work without paying for them?
- Have I borrowed something that I never returned? Or did I return it in damaged condition without offering to fix or replace it?

- Am I an employer who pays unjust wages? Am I a business person who takes advantage of buyers?
- Have I cheated on or broken a morally just contract or agreement? This includes paying my debts on time and fulfilling obligations.
- Have I participated in the theft of someone's property, or knowingly benefited from it, and have not yet made restitution in proportion to my responsibility and share of what was stolen?
- Did I ever gamble excessively, through a lottery or other game, using money that should have been spent on needed items or given away as a charitable donation?

## 8 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Have I made judgments about anyone: my spouse, children, neighbors, co-workers, friends, priests, TV stars, politicians? I might think I'm right, but only God knows enough about that person to make such a judgment.
- When have I heard something bad about another person and assumed it was true?
- Do I hesitate to give others the benefit of the doubt?
- Have I disclosed another's faults and failings without valid and beneficial reasons?
- Have I exaggerated information about someone in order to make myself or the case I'm presenting look better?
- When have I lied or deceived? How have I been insincere?
- How have I bragged? If I boast to make myself look better than others, I'm lying. If I fail to give credit to God, I'm lying.
- When did I mock someone's behavior? This is unloving.
- Did I gossip or say something that made another person look bad?
- Have I pointed out a co-worker's faults in the hope that I'll get his job?
- Have I deliberately led someone into error or sin by saying things contrary to truth?
- Did I reveal secrets that should have been kept confidential?
- Do I sound critical, negative or uncharitable when I talk?

- When have I been untrue in my deeds? When have I been hypocritical or undependable?
- Have I ever been ashamed of the truth of Jesus Christ or the teachings of the Church? Have I compromised the truth or implied by my behavior that I agreed with things that are contrary to God's laws?
- If I have been involved in a court case, did I contribute to the condemnation of the innocent, the exonerating of the guilty, or the unfair punishment of the accused?
- When I've realized the sin of my words, have I failed to make reparation or to seek forgiveness from the people I've affected?
- Have I violated someone's right to privacy by insisting on learning something I had no right to know? Or by spreading this information to others?

## 9 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

- Do I jealously wish I had relationships as good as someone else's?
- Have I had sexual thoughts about someone other than my spouse, without immediately dismissing them or praying to banish them?
- Did I ever become obsessed with someone's physical shape, dwelling on it or pointing it out to others?
- Do I let my imagination go uncontrolled? Do I fantasize impurely?
- Have I treated someone as an object, rather than with dignity and respect?
- Have I enjoyed pornography or "cheese-cake" pictures for the sake of lustful pleasure?
- Have I been lax about purifying my heart? Has attuning my intellect and will to God's holiness and way of loving been unimportant to me?
- Has modesty been unimportant to me? Modesty means refusing to unveil whatever should remain hidden, out of respect for yourself and others.
- Have I been attracted to voyeuristic peeking at people in their privacy?

- When someone I know has violated the privacy or sexuality of others, have I ignored it?
- Have I encouraged sexual permissiveness by promoting "safe sex" instead of abstinence?

## 10 You shall not covet your neighbor's property.

- Is my heart greedy? Do I want more, more, more instead of being content with what I have?
- Is my heart set more on earthly possessions than on the true treasures of heaven?
- Am I envious, moody or gloomy about what I don't have?
- Do I wish I had a bigger house, a better-paying job or a nicer anything, like those that belong to others? Because of these desires, I've failed to set an example of how to be content with what God has given me.
- Have I tried to obtain what others own through unjust means, such as stealing or using money that was needed for something else?
- Do I wish God had made me to be like somebody famous? Do I consider myself to be too much of a nobody to do what God has called me to do?
- Do I wish that I lived elsewhere, forgetting to appreciate where God has put me now?
- Have I ever wished that someone would die so I could receive his or her inheritance? Or that someone would lose his job so I could move into it? Or that someone's calamity would make what she owns available to me?
- When have I refused to do good to someone who asked for it, because I thought he or she had enough help? When did I refuse to give money to someone, thinking he or she already had enough? Or when have I turned my back on someone because I was jealous of that person?
- How often have I sought consolation in the abundance of material goods? How much have I rejected God and trusted in possessions more? The reason I don't have more possessions is because God doesn't want me to have them right now, and that's because He's protecting me from getting into more sin. Do I dislike believing that?
- Do I hate myself for my sinfulness? Am I unwilling to forgive myself? Am I jealous of those who seem holier than me? In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I will be set free. God will forget my sins.

**Do you feel bad reading this Examination of Conscience? Does it seem *too difficult*? Perhaps you feel some resentment and frustration, because the commandments are so imposing.**

In the Old Testament, the Laws were imposed upon the people. God was an outside force who demanded obedience. Times have changed. We are a New Testament people. Jesus gave us his Holy Spirit so that the Laws would be written in our hearts. They come from within us, now.

Are you living an Old Testament or a New Testament life? Are you trying to obey God by following his rules, or are you relying on the Holy Spirit to increase your holiness from within?

The more we allow God's Spirit to spring up within us like refreshing waters that nourish our lives, the more natural it becomes for us to obey the Ten Commandments — without even thinking much about them!

Remember, it's not possible to convert from every sinful tendency all at once, no matter how much you desire it. Be patient with yourself. Purification is a process. God loves you right now, and so should you!

To move away from the Old Testament mentality about the Ten Commandments and your fear of God as a punisher, grow now into a New Testament, love-filled relationship with the Holy Spirit! Through God's power, you can be holy, loving, and faithful!

Your church's name and  
confession schedule / invitation  
go here

### Prayerful Act Of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you, yet I should love you above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Thank you for helping me. Increase in me the gifts of your Holy Spirit so that I can become more holy. I pray this in the name of Jesus my Savior, Amen.