

Examination of Conscience

I. Pride – [Virtues: Magnanimity, Humility]

1. Do I refuse to ask for help when I'm swamped or to admit I don't know or can't do something? Do I neglect to do things I should because I am afraid I won't do it perfectly the first time? Am I able to learn from my mistakes and try again?
2. Am I obsessed with the desire to excel beyond my actual gifts and to be perfect in whatever objectives (personal, social, professional) I have set out for myself? Am I so driven to succeed that God, family, and friends are neglected?
3. Am I severely and unnecessarily critical of myself or of others (family members, boss or employees, service persons, etc.) Do I put others down to raise myself up?
4. Do I think my views are the only correct views and my way of doing things the only right way? Do I find it difficult to participate in others' projects, or to take a secondary or supportive role?
5. Am I crushed by the lack of recognition for my contributions? Do I work mainly for praise or for money? Am I resentful of the place God has assigned me in life? Do I see all I do, no matter how "insignificant," as in His service?
6. Do I have a subtle sense that my spiritual works (daily Mass, Rosary, etc.) have made me better than others, who I think aren't nearly as spiritual as I?
7. Am I overly concerned about my looks, clothes, jewelry, my house, my garden, my car, etc.? Am I obsessed with my figure or my physique? Do I spend excessive hours and funds (ex., Botox or face lifts) perfecting or preserving my appearance? (Vanity)

II. Envy – [Virtues: Gratitude, Trust in God's Providence]

1. Do I feel like God or others owe me happiness, health, wealth, success, etc? Do I secretly resent it when other people seem to have these things, when I think I deserve them more?
2. Do I foster a climate of hostility through innuendo or by casting suspicion on someone who appears to have what I think should be mine? (eg., someone else has been assigned a position on the Parish Council you feel should have been yours. You begin to point out everything he does wrong, secretly hoping he will be asked to step down.)
3. Have I ever wished failure or disgrace on someone I envy? Have I ever taken steps behind the scenes to make this happen? Have I ever secretly dug the hole I hoped he/she would fall into?
4. Do I take the time to count my blessings? Am I grateful for all the good things that have happened to me today and through my life? Have I thanked God for

them? Do I resist God's Providence for my life – or do I try to find God's blessings within His Providence for me?

5. Do I tend to compare what I have to what others have? Am I easily offended by real or imagined slights? Do I nurture my sense of grievance when I think I have been passed over for something I deserve?

6. Is my heart set on the wrong things – the false gods of secular culture? Have I taken the time to discover the particular gifts God has given me? Have I spent my energy developing my gifts and growing in virtues (like charity, compassion, mercy, prayerfulness, etc.) which are plentiful rather than competing for worldly goods which are of no ultimate value?

III. Anger – [Virtues: Fortitude, Patience Forgiveness]

1. In contrast to Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins, do I hold onto my anger against those who have stepped on my rights or wounded my pride? Unlike God, do I refuse to forgive others for their offenses against me?

2. Does my perfectionism set me up to be angry at anyone who, in my opinion, sets impossibly high goals for me to achieve? Am I too proud to just do my best before God and stand with that? Am I humble enough to accept not being perfect?

3. Am I passive aggressive – do I go limp and do nothing but seethe inside in my anger? Do I withdraw into frozen hostility? Do I complain bitterly about others' behind their backs rather than attempt to rectify things in a way that serves the true and the good and not just *my* desires? Do I seek revenge, quietly, all the while seeming to smile?

4. In a disagreement, do I take potshots at others, dredge up every real or imagined hurt from the past or generalize an offense into “you always” or “you never?” Do I ridicule others or belittle them? Am I so busy defending myself that I won't hear a person out? Am I willing to consider my own faults?

5. Do I mainly focus on the negative in others? When something upsets me, do I try to empathize with the person who offended me, seeking to understand his reasons for acting as he did? Do I assume the worst about that person or that the offense was intentional?

IV. Sloth – [Virtues: Hope, Zeal, Perseverance]

1. Have I made a commitment to daily prayer and spiritual reading? Have I set goals reasonable and in keeping with my other responsibilities? Have I persevered – whether I feel like it or not? Do I go for days or weeks without any effort to pray or to nourish myself spiritually?

2. Do I keep myself so busy and distracted there is no time left for God? Do I respond to the grace God gives me each day to help me become the person He wants me to be?
3. Do I reach out to others in charity? Do I take an active interest in them and in their lives? Or do I expect others to reach out to me? Do I take the initiative to make the phone call, extend the invitation, make the offer to help?
4. Do I generally put off doing things, hoping that they will just go away? If I absolutely cannot get out of fulfilling my responsibilities, do I wait until the last possible minute? Do I do a half hearted job?
5. Am I easily frustrated – and give up quickly – when things require too much effort and don't come easily?
6. Do I use “tolerance” as an excuse to avoid dealing with issues or problems? Do I hide behind a “live and let live” attitude so that I don't ever have to confront people about anything – even if they are doing themselves and/or others great harm?
7. Do I “die” in front of the TV at night, neglecting prayer and study, my family, my parish or other community involvements?

V. Avarice – [Virtues: Prudence, Liberality, Justice]

1. Do I treat money as an end rather than as a means? (eg., do I earn money to provide for family needs -- present and future -- or do I earn it for its own sake? Do I keep my money to myself?
2. Do I share my earnings generously with others? Do I help those in need? Do I spend it mostly on myself? Do I hoard it and consider myself to be virtuously frugal?
3. Do I hunger for increasingly larger amounts of money? Do I daydream about money and what it can buy? Have I convinced myself that these things are necessary for my self-esteem, respect in the community, or just a “decent” life?
3. Am I always greedy for more material things, always scouting out my next purchase? Are my closets, my garage, my attic, whatever, filled to the brim and overflowing? Are my charge accounts at the maximum? Am I seeking yet more credit to increase my purchasing power? Have I taken out a second mortgage to finance luxuries? Am I driven to work overtime to keep up with unnecessary expenses?
4. As an employer, do I pay a fair wage? Do I follow the Church's teachings on health, retirement, disability and unemployment benefits? As an employee, do I give a fair day's work? Am I diligent and honest?

VI. Gluttony – [Virtues: Temperance, Moderation]

1. Am I fussy about the food placed before me? Do I require delicacies and luxurious types of food? Is my life centered on food, so that I “live to eat” rather than “eat to live?”
2. Is my use of food and drink unbalanced? Do I eat excessive amounts of food? Do I eat too little? Do I hide my unbalanced eating habits by eating alone? [If Anorexia and Bulimia are extreme examples of these and are driven by psychological factors that require professional counsel.]
3. Do I use food to fill my loneliness or my depression? Do I soothe my wounded feelings with food? Is this a way of avoiding real issues I need to address or changes I need to make in my life? Am I allowing the Holy Spirit to find better ways of dealing with life’s difficulties? Do I seek my true joy in God?
4. Do I drink to excess? Do I take recreational drugs?
5. What steps have I taken to exercise moderation in satisfying my appetites? Have I ever tried fasting (again, in moderation)? Have I ever voluntarily denied myself some treat or even a meal as a spiritual practice?

VII. Lust – [Virtues: Love, Chastity, Purity of Heart]

1. Do I tend to think of other people in terms of what they can do for me? Do I engage in sexual relations (even with my spouse) primarily for what I get out of it? Do I seek to give a “sincere gift of myself” to him or her?
2. Am I immodest in my dress, humor or manner of presenting myself? Do I seek to arouse lust in others this way?
3. Do I watch TV programs, movies, visit websites or read magazines or other materials that entices me? Do I think the fornication and adultery presented as mainstream entertainment is in conformity with my ultimate fulfillment in Christ?