

METHODS OF SELF-EXAMINATION

THE SEVEN GRIEVOUS SINS

I. Pride

Pride is putting self in the place of God as the center and objective of our life, or of some department thereof. It is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent on God for our existence and placed by him in a specific relationship to the rest of his creation.

IRREVERENCE. Have you deliberately neglected the worship of God on Sunday in his Church? Were you content with just "going through the motions" when you were at church? Have you disregarded Holy Days and additional opportunities for worshipping God? Have you failed to thank God or to adequately express your gratitude to God for all the many blessings he gives you every day?

Have you shown disrespect of God or holy things by deliberately treating them, in thought, word, or deed, in a profane, contemptuous or over-familiar manner? Have you used holy things for personal advantage? Have you attempted to bribe or placate God by religious practices or promises?

SENTIMENTALITY. Have you been satisfied with pious feelings and beautiful ceremonies without striving to obey God's will?

PRESUMPTION. Have you been dependent on yourself rather than on God, with the consequent negligence of the sacraments and prayer? Have you dispensed yourself from ordinary duties on the grounds that you are too superior for those duties or obligations? Have you been satisfied or complacent over your spiritual achievements? Have you refused to avoid, when possible, immediate occasions of temptation? Have you preferred your own ideas, customs, schemes or techniques to those of the Church? Have you held to or encouraged foolish optimism?

Have you failed to recognize your job as a divine vocation, or to offer your work to God? Have you been unwilling to surrender to and abide in Christ, to let him act in and through you? Have you failed to offer intercessions for persons or causes that have, or should have, your interest and support, to God?

DISTRUST. Have you refused to recognize God's wisdom, providence and love? Have you been worried, anxious, had misgivings, or scrupulosity? Have you been guided by your own perfectionism rather than on the love of God? Have you attempted to discern or control the future by spiritualism, astrology, fortune-telling or the like? Have you practiced magic or superstition?

OVER-SENSITIVENESS. Have you expected that others will dislike, reject or mistreat you? Have you been over-ready to interpret the attitude of others, or quick to take offense? Have you held to unfounded suspicions?

Have you been timid in accepting responsibility, or been cowardly in facing difficulty or suffering? Have you surrendered yourself to feelings of depression, gloom, pessimism, discouragement, self-pity, or fear of death, instead of fighting to be brave, cheerful and hopeful?

DISOBEDIENCE. Have you rejected God's known will in favor of your own interests or pleasures? Have you been disobedient to the legitimate (and therefore divinely ordained) laws, regulations or authority of the Church, state, husband, parents, teachers, etc.? Have you been slow and reluctant to give your obedience to such authority? Have you failed, when in authority, to fulfill responsibilities or to consider the best interests of those under you?

Have you refused to learn God's will as revealed in Scripture, expounded in instructions or expert advice, or discernible through prayer, meditation or the reading of religious books? Have you been absorbed in your own affairs, leaving little time, energy or interest for the things of God?

Have you violated the confidence of someone? Have you broken legitimate promises or contracts? Have you done so through irresponsibility or through treachery (willfulness and malice)? Have you unnecessarily disappointed another, or the caused shame or anxiety to those who love you?

IMPENITENCE. Have you refused to search out and face up to your sins, or to confess and admit them before God? Have you disregarded your sins or held to the pretense that you are better than truly you are? Have you justified yourself or discounted your sins as being insignificant, normal or inevitable? Have you been self-righteous in comparing yourself with others?

Have you refused to accept just punishment or to make due reparation for your words and deeds when possible? Have you resorted to deceit or lying to

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escape the consequences of your sins? Have you allowed another to suffer the blame for your faults? Have you tried to overcompensate or attempted self-reform or self-vengeance, to avoid surrendering to God in humble penitence?

Have you felt shame (hurt pride) or sorrow for yourself because your sins make you less respectable than you like to think you are, or because you fear punishment or injury to your reputation, rather than feeling sorrow for what sin is in the eyes of God? Have you refused to admit you were in the wrong or to apologize? Have you refused to accept forgiveness from God or others? Have you doubted that God can forgive your sins or failed to make your confession when you need to do so? Have you been unwilling to forgive yourself?

VANITY. Have you taken the credit, rather than giving credit and glory to God, for your talents, abilities, insights, accomplishments and/or good works? Have you refused to admit indebtedness to others, or adequately to express gratitude for their help? Have you been a hypocrite? Have you held pretense to virtues you do not possess? Have you feigned humility, when you really were not humble? Have you harshly judged others for faults you excuse in yourself?

Have you boasted, exaggerated, drawn attention to yourself by talking too much, by claiming ability, wisdom, experience or influence you do not have, or by eccentric or ostentatious behavior? Have you held undue concern over, or expenditure of, time or money? Have you spent too much energy on your appearance, looks, dress, surroundings, etc., in order to impress others? Have you deliberately been slovenly for the same purpose? Have you sought, desired or relished flattery or compliments?

ARROGANCE. Have you insisted that others conform to your wishes, recognize your leadership, or accept your own estimation of your worth? Have you been overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, or obstinate?

SNOBBERY. Have you had pride over your race, family, position, personality, education, skill, achievements, or possessions?

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II. Anger

Anger is open rebellion against God or our fellow creatures. Its purpose and desire is to eliminate any obstacle to our self-seeking, to retaliate against any threat to our security, and to avenge any personal insult or injury.

RESENTMENT. Have you refused to discern, accept or fulfill God's vocation for you? Have you been dissatisfied with the talents, abilities or opportunities God has given you? Have you been unwilling to face up to difficulties or sacrifices? Have you unjustly rebelled or complained at the circumstances of your life? Have you tried to escape from reality or attempted to force your will upon reality? Have you indulged yourself in daydreams to escape reality? Have you transferred blame for your maladjustment to God, to your parents, to society, or to other individuals? Have you had hatred for God, or been antisocial? Have you been cynical? Have you harbored annoyance at the contrariness of things? Have you used profanity or grumbled at reality?

PUGNACITY. Have you attacked another in anger? Have you committed murder in deed or desire? Have you been combative or nursed grudges? Have you injured another person by striking, cursing or insulting him? Have you injured another person by damaging his reputation or property? Have you been quarrelsome; bickered with, contradicted, nagged, been rude to, or snubbed others?

RETALIATION. Have you wrought your vengeance for wrongs, real or imagined, or plotted vengeance? Have you been harsh or excessive in punishing those for whom you are responsible? Have you been hostile, sullen or exercised rash judgment? Have you refused to forgive, or to offer or accept reconciliation? Have you been unwilling to love, to do good to, or to pray for your enemies? Have you boycotted or ostracized another for selfish reasons? Have you spoiled the pleasure of others by being uncooperative or filled with disdain, because you have not gotten your way, or because you feel out of sorts or superior?

III. Envy

Envy is dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation, manifested in begrudging his gifts and vocation to others.

JEALOUSY. Have you taken offense at the talents, success or good fortune of others? Have you been selfish or unnecessarily competitive? Have you taken

pleasure at the difficulty or distress of others? Have you belittled others?

MALICE. Have you felt ill will towards another or dealt in false accusations, slander, or backbiting? Have you read false motives into others' behavior? Have you initiated, collected or retold gossip? Have you aroused, fostered or organized antagonism against others? Have you been unnecessarily critical, even when you've related the truth? Have you deliberately annoyed others, or teased or bullied them?

CONTEMPT. Have you scorned another's virtue, ability, shortcomings, or failings? Have you felt prejudice against those you consider inferior, or who consider you inferior, or who seem to threaten your security or position? Have you ridiculed persons, institutions or ideals?

IV. Covetousness

Covetousness is the refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the inordinate accumulation of material things; in the use of other persons for our personal advantage; or in the quest for status, power or security at their expense.

INORDINATE AMBITION. Have you pursued status, power, influence, reputation, or possessions at the expense of the moral law, of other obligations, or of the rights of others? Have you been ruthless or unfair in competition? Have you put yourself or your family first? Have you conformed to standards you recognize as wrong or inadequate in order to get ahead? Have participated in intrigue or conspiracy for self-advancement?

DOMINATION. Have you sought to use or possess others? Have you been over-protective of your children? Have you refused to correct or punish your children lest you lose their affection? Have you insisted that they conform to your ideal for them contrary to their own vocation? Have you imposed your will on others by force, guile, whining, or refusal to cooperate? Have you been over-ready to advise or command? Have you abused authority? Have you patronized, pauperized, or put others under a debt of gratitude? Have you considered yourself ill used when others' affection or compliance is not for sale?

Have you been a sycophant (attempted to win favor, support, affection or advancement in position, through practicing flattery of persons of influence)? Have you refused to uphold the truth, to fulfill your duties, to perform good works, or to defend those wrongfully attacked because you fear criticism or

ridicule, or because you seek to gain the favor and approval of others? Have you lead, tempted or encouraged another to sin?

AVARICE. Have you inordinately pursued wealth or material things? Have you stolen, been dishonest, misrepresented, or shared in stolen goods? Have you Cheated in business, taxes, school or games? Have you made worldly success the goal of your life or the standard for judging others?

PRODIGALITY. Have you wasted natural resources or your personal possessions? Have you been extravagant or lived beyond your income, to impress others or to maintain status? Have you failed to pay debts you acquired? Have you gambled more than you could afford to lose, or to win unearned profits? Have you unnecessarily borrowed or been careless with others' money? Have you spent on yourself what is needed for the welfare of others?

PENURIOUSNESS. Have you been unduly protective of wealth or security? Have you selfishly insisted on vested interests or on claimed rights? Have you refused to support or to help those who have a claim on you? Have you "sponged on others?" Have you been stingy? Have you failed to give due proportion of your income to the Church and charity, or of your time and energy to good works? Have you failed to pay pledges promised to the Church or charities when you have been able to do so?

V. Gluttony

Gluttony is the overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by extension the inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort.

INTEMPERANCE. Have you been overindulgent in food, drink, smoking, or other physical pleasures? Have you been fastidious, fussy, demanded excessively high standards, or been a dilettant? Have you condemned some material things or pleasures as evil in themselves, attempting to prohibit their use rather than their abuse?

LACK OF DISCIPLINE. Have you been negligent in keeping the Church's days and seasons of fasting? Have you failed to use other needed means of self-discipline? Have you neglected your bodily health—not getting sufficient rest, recreation, exercise, or wholesome nourishment? Have you failed to use or to cooperate with available medical care when ill? Have you used sickness as a means to escape responsibilities?

VI. Lust

Lust is the misuse of sex for personal gratification, debasing it from the holy purpose for which God has given it to us.

UNCHASTITY. Have you violated of the Church's marriage laws? Have you lacked consideration for your spouse in partaking of the marital relationship? Have you refused to fulfill the purpose of Holy Matrimony in the bringing forth and giving adequate care of children, or to take your full share in the responsibilities or work involved? Have you been unfaithful to your spouse? Have you indulged in sexual contact outside of matrimony, in thought or act, alone or with others?

IMMODESTY. Have you stimulated sexual desire in others by word, dress, or actions; or in yourself by reading, pictures, or fantasies? Have you collected or recounted sexual stories?

PRUDERY. Have you had a fear of sex or condemned it as evil in itself, even when sanctified within marriage? Have you refused to seek instruction from the Church regarding a true understanding of sexuality, or attempted to prevent others from obtaining it? Have you stimulated excessive and harmful curiosity by undue secrecy?

CRUELTY. Have you deliberately inflicted pain, mental or physical, on another. Have you tormented or abused animals?

VII. Sloth

Sloth is the refusal to respond to our opportunities for growth, service or sacrifice.

LAZINESS. Have you been indolent in performing spiritual, mental or physical duties? Have you neglected your family, business or social obligations? Have you been discourteous because you didn't wish to spend the extra energy? Have you procrastinated in performing disliked tasks? Have you involved yourself in busy-ness or triviality to avoid more important commitments? Have you devoted excessive time to rest, recreation, amusement, television, light reading or the like? Have you wasted your employer's time, or performed shoddy or inadequate work?

INDIFFERENCE. Have you been unconcerned over injustice to others, especially that caused by currently accepted social standards? Have you been un-

mindful of the suffering of those around you? Have you failed to become adequately informed on the Christian principles involved in contemporary issues? Have you neglected duties to state or community? Have you failed to provide adequately for those whom you employ, or to treat them justly? Have you required them to stay late to perform urgent tasks, and then forced them to "loose" the overtime they had acquired for the work required by you?

Have you ignored the needy, lonely or unpopular persons in your own family, or in the parish family, or in the neighborhood? Have you been unwilling to minister to them? Have you been insufficiently attentive to the religious and other needs of your family? Have you failed to fulfill your obligation of Christian missionary witness?

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The second method of self-examination is to look at the Ten Commandments with the questions and definitions given and ask oneself to what degree one is guilty of these, and how one has transgressed these sins.

- I. **I AM THE LORD THY GOD; THOU SHALT HAVE NONE OTHER GODS BUT ME. [*The Sin of Pride*]**
 - Have you loved God as much as you ought to?
 - Have you been more interested in self than in God?
 - Have you made it your chief aim to be always on top?
 - What have you been vain about; personal appearance, clothes, personality, possessions, your family, ability, success in games or in studies?
 - Have you scorned other people for their misfortunes, sins, stupidity, or other weaknesses? Scorned other people's religion?
 - Talked too much; called attention to yourself?
 - Been sorry for yourself, self-pitying?
 - Refused to admit when you were in the wrong?
 - Refused to apologize?
 - Been resentful or suspicious of others through over-sensitiveness?
 - Have you been stubborn and self-willed? In what ways?