



EXAMINATION
OF CONSCIENCE

INTENTIONALLY WRITTEN
FOR PRIESTS
USING THE 10 COMMANDMENTS



EXAMINATION
OF CONSCIENCE

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

*"I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
You shall have no other gods before me"*

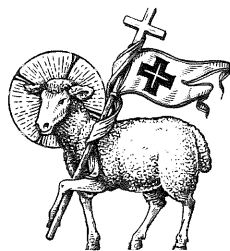
- Do I have other gods?
- How sensitized is my heart to the movement of God?
- How sensitized is my heart to the subtlety of sin?
- Am I living with a level of self-awareness appropriate for *the* spiritual leader of hundreds, or thousands, of people?
- How intentionally diligent am I to resisting any and all forms of temptation at the first moment of its detection?
- How intentionally diligent am I in closing my exposure to evil or sin?
- Have I rationalized such that I have subtlety normalized "little sins?"
- How would I describe my desire for:
Popularity? Power? Status? Notoriety? Reputation? Control?
- How would I describe my obedience:
In the big things? In the little things?
- Who, in practice, is in control of my life?
- In my daily decision making, do I rely more on myself or God?
- How would I describe my practice of daily discernment?
- Do I seek to move in the direction and pace that the Lord is leading or do I often move ahead, presuming that I know the best way forward?
- To whom do I turn to at the end of the day:
To the Lord? To forms of self-indulgent behavior?
- Where do I turn for comfort:
Food? Alcohol? Material possessions? Television? Internet? Work?
- Am I addicted to any sort of chemical substance or any sort of self-indulgent behavior that alters my ability to be a free-thinking and free-choosing individual?
- If the circumstances necessitated pastoral ministry, have I ever not been able to celebrate a Sacrament because of the amount of alcohol consumed?
- Have I ever driven my vehicle with more than the legal limit of alcohol in me?
- Have I let hobbies or forms of leisure and entertainment become the most important aspects of my life?



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"

- Am I still "in awe" of God?
- Have I become too familiar with God?
- When I speak of God do I speak from a place of reverence?
- When I speak of God am I speaking of the one whom I love?
- Do I speak of Him but not remain with Him?
- Do I pray?
Do I pray daily? Do I pray a holy hour daily?
- Do I pray the Liturgy of the Hours?
Do I pray all the Hours?
Do I pray all the Hours I promised to pray at my ordination?
- Do I make my silent retreat every year?
- Do I have a spiritual director?
Do I speak with them once a month?
- Do I have a consistent, regular, singular Confessor?
Do I celebrate the Sacrament at least once a month?
- Have I come to take God for granted?
- How do I approach the sacred?
- Have I become too familiar with the sacred?
- Am I fascinated by that which is holy?
- Do I intentionally surround myself with that which is holy or that which is secular?
- Is my personal lifestyle more like the saints or more like the secular?
- Do I approach the Sacraments with awe?
- Have I become too familiar with the Sacraments?
- Do I prepare for Mass?
- How do I prepare for Mass?
- Do I celebrate the Mass as if it were "my first Mass, my only Mass, my last Mass?"
- Have I celebrated Mass when my soul is not in a state of grace?
- Have I come to take God's mercy for granted?
- How would I describe my "awe" and "need" for the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Do I "automatically expect" to be forgiven because of His mercy?
- How often do I receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Does my use of language honor God and the sacred Office of the Priesthood, or could it occasionally be a cause for disappointment or scandal?



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy"

- What is my interior attitude towards Sunday?
- Is Sunday "another work day" or is it a day consecrated to God?
- Outside of my celebrating Mass, what about my Sunday is consecrated, or "set apart" from the rest of life?
- Outside of my celebrating Mass, what about my Sunday is different from any other day of the week?
- Do I look forward to seeing my parishioners at Sunday Mass?
- Do I anticipate the Sunday Masses?
- Have I ever interiorly rushed through the Sunday Mass schedule so I could "get some free time?"
- *"Preparation for preaching is so important a task that a prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity should be devoted to it. A preacher who does not prepare is not 'spiritual'; he is dishonest and irresponsible with the gifts he has received." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium no. 145)*

Does the amount of time I spend preparing for preaching authentically reflect the sobriety of what Pope Francis is calling preachers to?

- Do I prepare for preaching:

The way I should?

The way I used to?

- Have I ever planned my weekend homily "in the Confessional" before the Saturday afternoon Vigil Mass?
- What is my interior attitude towards the laity who assist with the celebration of the Liturgy?

Am I kind to those who serve?

Am I appreciative of their service?

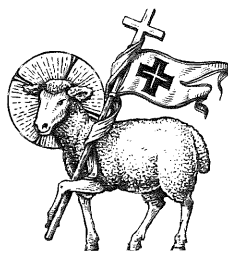
- Has anyone quit their service to the Church because of the way I treated them? If so, what is my response?



THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor your father and your mother"

- Am I faithful to Church teaching?
All of the Church's teaching?
- Do I teach and preach what the Church teaches?
- How much permission have I given myself with "my opinion" versus what the Church teaches?
- If I say "I want my people to think for themselves" do I feel that they should think "with the Church" or believe "whatever it is that they conclude?"
- Has anything in my preaching or teaching ever led anyone to doubt Magisterial teaching?
- Have I ever not preached the fullness of Truth out of fear of losing popularity or offending parishioners?
(Please note: All things are done with prudence and the level of discernment expected of someone living *in persona Christi capitis*. The examination within the question is about resistance and inner fear, not boldness.)
- Has my reluctance to speak in defense of Truth or the Faith because of my own fear led others to sin, or made them susceptible to it? Has my own taste or immoral actions encouraged others to follow suit and deny God's will?
- Have I preached the Truth, not out of an interior space of love, but more out of a need to be right?
- Do I preach the Truth with love?
- Do I defend the Church? Do I speak well of the Church and of Pope Francis?
- Am I obedient to the Church in all things?
- Am I living with integrity all of the promises I made at both my Diaconate and Priestly ordinations?
- Do I remember the five promises I made at my Diaconate ordination? Can I recall them to memory?
- Do I remember the seven promises I made at my priesthood ordination? Can I recall them to memory?
- Am I obedient to the Bishop in all things?
- Do I attend all events priests are expected to attend? (For example: meetings, continuing education study days, retreats, etc.)
Do I show up? If not, why not? Do I arrive on time? Do I leave early?
When I am there, am I present? Am I present to my brother priests?
- Do I speak well of Archbishop Fabre? of previous Archbishops?
- Am I holding on to any resentments towards "the Church?"
- Am I holding on to any resentments towards Archbishop Fabre? towards previous Archbishops?
- Have I ever celebrated the Sacraments in another parish, or in another parish's boundaries, without the explicit permission or delegation of the pastor?
- Do I intentionally respect the authority of my brother priests as pastors?



THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not kill"

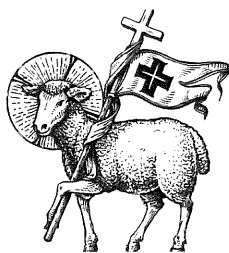
- What is my interior attitude towards the presbyterate?
- What is my interior attitude towards native-born priests?
- What is my interior attitude towards foreign-born priests?
- What are my interior judgments about other priests?
Younger priests? Older priests? Conservative? Liberal?
- Am I holding on to any resentment towards other priests?
- *"To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgment and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our judgment, our presumption to know everything about him."*
(Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus no. 14)
What is my response to the Holy Father's words, especially with regards to how I speak of my brother priests?
- Do I gossip?
- Have I said anything negative about another priest?
- When I notice a character flaw within a brother priest am I moved to show mercy or have I ever shared with other people my observance of his character flaw?
- Have I said anything negative to another priest about another priest where the comment is actually coming from a place of hurt or pain within my own heart?
- With the group of people I most regularly spend time, do I notice patterns of negativity or complaining?
Have I rationalized and approved this behavior because "I just need to get this off my chest" or they "just need to vent"?
- Am I holding onto unforgiveness towards another priest?
- Do I tend to spend more time critiquing other priests rather than taking an honest look at myself and seeking to grow in virtue?
- Have I purposely or willfully done anything to hurt another priest?
- In relation to other priests:
Do I need to ask for forgiveness? What do I need to be forgiven of?
Am I willing to ask for forgiveness? If not, why not?
Am I willing to ask for forgiveness this week? If not, why not?
- What is my interior attitude towards my parish staff or parish volunteers?
- What are my interior judgments about my parish staff or parish volunteers?
- Am I holding on to any resentment towards:
My parish staff? My parish volunteers? Certain groups of parishioners?
- Am I holding onto unforgiveness towards:
My parish staff? My parish volunteers? Certain groups of parishioners?
- Have I said anything negative to another priest about parishioner?
- Have I said anything negative to a parishioner about another parishioner?



THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not commit adultery"

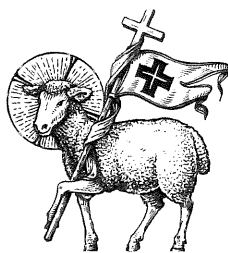
- *"Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being" (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2337)*
How would I describe the "integration of my sexuality?"
- How would I describe my commitment to basic chastity?
- Do I practice custody of the eyes? Custody of my imagination?
- Have I pushed the limits of prudence:
With what I watch on television?
With the type of humor I respond to?
With my habits on the internet?
- Since my ordination, have I had a sexual encounter with another person?
- Have I indulged in sexual fantasy?
- Have I viewed pornography?
- Should the external forum know about my history of chastity?
- *"Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner" (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2349)*
Does my practical, everyday living of celibacy look like the "undivided heart" the Church asks me to live "in a remarkable manner?"
- How would I describe my commitment to celibacy?
- Through the lens of C.C.C. no. 2349's "undivided heart," who would I say has my greatest affection: God or some other particular person?
- Through the lens of C.C.C. no. 2349's "undivided heart," with whom do I share my heart with on the most regular basis: God or some other particular person?
- Would my patterns of decision making and/or independence be more likened to the commitment of a married man or a bachelor?
- Is my lifestyle more like a man committed to his spouse (God, the Church) or more like a single bachelor who works a lot for the Church?
- Do I have other "loves" competing with God:
Work? Pleasure? Recreation?
- On my day off, on my personal vacation:
Do I celebrate Mass?
Do I pray the Liturgy of the Hours?
Do I pray a holy hour?
Do I spend more time, or less time, with God?



THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not steal"

- How often am I away from my parish:
During the day? During the week? During the month? During the year?
- Other than for the four weeks of vacation, and the one week for retreat, am I away from the parish?
(pilgrimages, pastoral commitments elsewhere, etc.) If so:
Does Archbishop Fabre know? Have I co-discerned this with him?
Does my Pastoral Council know? Have I co-discerned this with them?
Does my parish know? How do they feel?
- When I agree to minister outside the diocese, does Archbishop Fabre know? Have I co-discerned this with him?
- How long is my day off? A day? More than 24 continuous hours?
- How many days of vacation do I take? Do I take more than four weeks? If personal necessity begs for more than four weeks, does Archbishop Fabre know? Do I ask him for permission? (Canon 533 §2)
- If I am to be absent from the parish for more than one continuous week, do inform Archbishop Fabre?
(Canon 533 §2)
- Have I taken things from the church or the parish that do not rightfully belong to me?
- Have I taken things from one assignment to the next assignment that should have stayed in the former parish?
- Do I have patterns of entitlement, feeling I "deserve" things because I am a priest or because I work so hard?
- Do I often need "the best?"
- If I took an honest inventory of my physical possessions would I live within, below, or above the means of my poorest parishioners?
- Is there anything in my personal lifestyle or personal finances that would cause my poorest parishioners to feel uncomfortable?
- If someone had never met me, and was in my presence for one day, would they, without my telling them, know that I made a promise of simplicity of life on the day of my ordination?
- If someone walked through my rectory would they, without my telling them, know that I made a promise of simplicity of life on the day of my ordination?
- What is my attitude toward parish funds:
Do I see it as "their" money with which I have been entrusted?
Do I see it as money that I can spend how I wish?
- How would I myself describe my financial management of parish funds? How would parishioners describe my financial management of parish funds?
- How would I describe the level of consultation I seek when I spend parish funds?



THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"

- Have I lied?
- Did I fail to keep secret what I should have kept confidential?
- Since the day of my ordination, I have broken the Seal of Confession ...
 - ... in directly revealing sin?*
 - ... in directly revealing or confirming the identity of the Penitent?*
 - ... by becoming too casual when speaking of what priests hear in the Confessional?*
- Have I become too familiar with the nature and awe of the Seal of Confession?
- Have I revealed personal private information (that is detrimental in nature):
 - About another priest?*
 - About a parishioner?*
- Have I revealed personal private information about others without knowing *with certainty* the truth of the matter?
- Have I distorted reality so as to make myself look good?
- Have I hurt the reputation of another priest?
- Have I hurt the reputation of a parishioner?
- Have I become so familiar with the concept of confidentiality that I have become desensitized to the reality of what it means to hold *all* confidential matters in the strictest sense of silence?
- Other than my Confessor and/or spiritual director, have I ever revealed *anything* regarding my assignment, or my change of assignment, to anyone before it was made public by the Bishop?
 - To another priest? If so, did I have the permission of the Bishop?*
 - To my priest friends? If so, did I have the permission of the Bishop?*
 - To my support group? If so, did I have the permission of the Bishop?*
 - To parishioners? If so, did I have the permission of the Bishop?*
- Have I ever revealed anything regarding my change of assignment in such a way that it presented problems for the priest replacing me?
- Whenever priest pastoral assignments are being made, have I indulged in speculation about "who's going where?"
 - In speculation about "who's going where" did I reveal information I knew to be confidential and yet chose to share anyway?*
 - Has that led to confidential news "spreading" public?*
- Do I enjoy "Church gossip?"
- Do I adhere to the fullness of diocesan policy?
- Have I done, or do I do, things in my parish that my parish or Pastoral Council do not know about?
- Have I done, or do I do, things in my parish "the diocese does not know about?"



THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet . . . your neighbor's wife"

- Am I fully committed to "the bride I have?"
- Would my parishioners say with ease: "He really loves *us*?"
- In my homilies, or in conversation with parishioners, how often do I mention another parish or another diocese (or perhaps my native culture or my native country)?
- Am I fully committed to my parish?
- Am I fully present to the parishioners, parish staff, and needs of the parish when I am in my parish?
- Do my parishioners ever complain: "He's never here"
- How extensively have I entered:

Into the parish?

Into the lives of the parishioners?

Into the distinct culture of my particular parish?

- Do I wish I had another parish?
- Do I wish I had different assignment?
- How would I describe my personal appreciation for the particular history of my parish?
- "Where" do I interiorly turn when I notice things I do not like about my parish?
- "Where" do I interiorly turn when I notice things I do not like about my parishioners?
- Do I want my parishioners to change so that I can love them, or do I love the parishioners as they are?
- How fast do I change things in the parish?

What signal do I send to the parishioners when I change things to the way "I like it?"

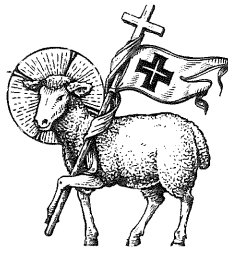
- Has my changing things in the parish negatively affected parishioners?

Have any been hurt?

Have any left the parish?

What is my response to that?

- Do I show *equal time* and *attention* to all parishioners? Would parishioners sense, without saying anything to me, that I have my favorites?
- Is there any particular group of parishioners I spend more time with than others?
Youth? Elderly? Homebound? Active? Men? Women? Rich? Poor?
- Is there any particular group of parishioners I dismiss or isolate myself from?
Youth? Elderly? Homebound? Active? Men? Women? Rich? Poor?



THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's"

- Do I compare myself to other priests?
- Am I jealous of other priests?
If so, why? What is my jealousy saying about me?
- Do I wish I had what other priests have?
Their personal gifts?
Their reputation?
Their assignment?
Their status?
Their relationship with another priest?
Their relationship with the Bishop?
- Am I inordinately competitive with other priests?
- Do I compare my parish to the neighboring parish? To other parishes?
- Do I compete with the neighboring parish? With other parishes?
- Do I wish I had a different presbyterate?
- Do I wish I could "climb the ladder?"
- Do I wish I had a title or status?