

MICHELLE KAREN D'SILVA

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

A GUIDE FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS


KAREN D'SILVA

®EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Conversion is only the beginning of our relationship with God, but sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Throughout our lives, the Divine seed that has been sown and watered in our souls by virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation will continue to be nourished, nurtured and harvested.

As young people, we encounter the deception of the devil every single day in the form of visual media, culture and our peers. The temptations lurking around in a sex-hyped culture only heightens the risk for sin. Today, the loss of sin is perhaps one of the gravest of sins encountered by young people. In a world where options for identity loom large and where boundaries for morality seem blur, faith has never been more challenged.

We must therefore find it in ourselves to seek every opportunity to come alive in our Baptismal calling, so we can flourish in our gifts and truly become agents of change in a world bereft of Hope. A life of Freedom is perhaps one of the greatest adventures of our Catholic faith. We must seek all ways to encounter this Freedom. We must strive to relive the stimulus of our first conversion. That is why with deep desire and depth, we make the Examination of Conscience, asking the Lord for His help, seeking His strength, so we can begin again.

The Examination of Conscience helps us to examine our lives, recognize sinful thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions and ask the Lord for His forgiveness, so we can go forth transformed to be the light and salt of the earth.

Through the lens of the Ten Commandments, the Examination involves a series of questions that invoke introspection and reflection allowing us to repent and make restitution for the ways we have offended God so that we can once again come live as young disciples to change the world.



THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

**"I am the Lord your God.
You shall have no other gods
before Me."**

(EXODUS 20:2-3)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

We have homework, parties, friends, internet, social media and all kinds of distractions that occupy centre stage and compete for our devotion. There are many pressures to complete assignments, finish up projects and achieve deadlines. It is easy to put everything else before God.

What would we be without God? It is a question we take for granted.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Have I loved God above all things or have I made other things — clothes, sports, TV, music, pleasure, friends — more important than God?
- Do I spend an overly amount of time on cell-phones and the internet knowing that it robs me of my time with God?
- Have I endangered my faith in God by believing and living out norms and ideologies of this culture that are opposed to my Catholic faith?
- Do I believe in star signs, read horoscopes and fortune telling?
- Do I believe that Christianity is the only true religion or do I believe that alternative paths are possible?
- Have I denied my faith before friends for the fear of losing them?
- Do I believe in my created image or have I embraced the culture's definitions of sexual identity?
- Do I serve God while living in sin?



HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Rise And Pray

Put God in your morning routine before school, work or college. Starting off your day with God gives a godly perspective throughout the day. Still, if you aren't a morning person, make time during the day when you are the most attentive, the most energetic and the most alert. In other words, a time when you can give your best, unreserved.

Get To Know God

Make it your priority to read the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand who God is. Talk to an elder or youth leader for aspects of your faith that are confusing.

Free to Fast

Food is not the only thing you can fast from. You are free to abstain from other things that occupy your time and rob you of your devotion to God. Sometimes, it's good to cut out a little bit of TV or fast from social media. It helps to put into perspective what we find most important and who or what we cannot live without.

Learn To Prioritize

No matter what we have on our plate, learning to prioritize is a skill that carries us over our weakness into faith. When you put your life in order, you find that there is room for both God and you.



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

**"You shall not make
wrongful use of the Name of
the Lord your God."**

(EXODUS 20:7)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

Many of us think that by refraining to curse God or use foul language, we fulfil the commandment of not taking God's name in vain. While this is important, it is imperative we understand that God is a seeker of hearts. When we speak, we are only reflecting that which occupies the centre of our hearts. God judges our motives and knows all our secret endeavours.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Have I used God's name carelessly?
- Do I swear and cuss often?
- Do I use foul language just to fit in?
- When I'm disappointed, do I blame God and vocally express it?
- Does my lifestyle represent the God who loves me or have I profaned His Holy Name in the way I dress, talk with my friends and behave with my parents?

HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Be Aware

Consciously be aware of the language you speak, especially in front of others.

Replace Negativity

Replace your negative thinking by using positive affirmation. Gratitude for God, appreciation for small things are critical gateways for change.



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

**"Remember the Sabbath
day, and keep it holy."**

(EXODUS 20:8)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

This commandment seems to be the one that almost all of us violate the most. We live in a world where we are so accessible to work, school, friends, and more. Our teachers, bosses, and more don't always understand that we want to spend one day not focusing on work, but rather on God. It is up to us to fix our schedules and prioritize our time so that we can make the Sabbath a healthy part of our Christian life.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Did I miss Mass on Sunday or a holy day of obligation through my own fault and laziness?
- Have I arrived at Mass late due to carelessness or left early without a serious reason?
- Have I received Holy Communion in a state of sin?
- Have I been angry with my parents, friends etc. and still received Holy communion without bringing it before the Lord during Mass?
- Have I fully given myself to the Sabbath or have I deliberately missed Mass or prayer meetings because other activities have taken priority?

HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Turn It Off

Take time to unplug your life. No TV. No internet. No computer. Get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life and spend time appreciating what God has provided. Spend time with family.

Schedule Well

There is nothing that ruins a day of rest more than the idea that you have so much to do the next day. Schedule time to do your homework throughout the week. Learn to prioritize tasks and chores.

You're Not Lazy

We live in a world that values work above all else. Some people may think we're just being lazy or slacking off by taking a day of rest, but we're actually building up our relationship with God. There's nothing lazy about a day of rest. It's what we need spiritually, emotionally, and physically.



THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

**"Honor your father and
your mother."**

(EXODUS 20:12)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

We only have our parents for a short time in our lives. Some of us have wonderful parents who provide for us spiritually, emotionally, and physically. But like us, parents too are humans who are weak. They also fall from grace and sometimes may not do things that work in our favor. Does this mean we just don't honor them at those times? No. It means that we need to learn to put our differences aside and honor them anyway. Parents are God's representatives. Honoring parents directly means we honor God.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Have I disobeyed my parents, and rebelled against those in authority (principals, teachers, coaches, leaders)?
- Have I disrespected my family members or treated them poorly by insulting, mocking, ridiculing or yelling at them?
- Have I disrespected my parents in front of others?
- Have I lied to my parents?
- Have I cheated, stolen from my parents?
- Have I bad mouthed about my parents to my friends?
- Have I ignored or avoided my parents in order to be part of the popular crowd?



HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Be Fair

Your parents are people just like you. They are not perfect. They make mistakes. Be fair to your parents before you jump to conclusions.

Talk Things Out With Them

We want to make good decisions. Hence when we have an issue, it helps to talk things out and clear our thoughts even if it means it won't be received well. It allows parents to know how we're thinking and gives them a chance to weigh in with their life experience. It also strengthens our relationship and creates room to build on trust.

Remind Them You Care

It's so easy to take family for granted. We think they'll always be there. Yet, sooner than later we find that our time with our parents is far too short. Take some time to remind your parents that you love them.

Learn To Forgive

Holding onto anger and disappointment with our parents does nothing but fester deep insidious wounds. We need to learn how to forgive. Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting, but it does mean letting go of what can diminish our own freedom and peace.



THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not murder."

(EXODUS 20:13)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

God is the giver of life. Therefore all acts done against the protection of life and our body is sin against the sacredness of God. In the Old Testament, people were punished heavily for murder much like our law today. Interestingly, Jesus in the New Testament went beyond this law to call for a greater understanding of love. Jesus said hate=murder. If you hate your brother, sister, malign their character, harbor revenge, you are guilty of murder because you have given up the right to love God and man who is made in the very image of God.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Have I intentionally cut or harmed my body when I have been hurt or disappointed?
- Have I taken drugs, allowed myself to become intoxicated, and used substances that will damage my health and violate my body?
- Have I physically harmed someone or tried to do so? Have I been violent in my words or actions?
- Have I spoken ill about others, exposed their faults and wrong doings to my friends?
- Have I exaggerated against someone's wrong to others especially if the wrong is done against me?
- Have I exposed someone's secrets and shared intimate pictures of them shaming them?
- Do I harbour deep resentment towards someone, refusing to forgive?
- Have I acted rudely, impolitely or arrogantly toward others when I was angry?
- Did I attempt suicide or entertain thoughts of taking my life?
- Did I have an abortion, or encourage or help someone else to have one?
- Have I supported the cause of abortion for teenage pregnancies?



HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Surrender And Trust

Give your anger to God. Prayer is one of the most powerful tools we have to bring about the change we need in our hearts. When we're angry, jealous, or hurt, we can surrender our hurts to God. We can trust God. We can trust His nature not to condemn but to heal and restore.

Seek Help

Expressing our anger or hurt to someone we trust can help alleviate the emotions that lead to murder. Talking to an elder can help rule out deeper roots and experiences which have led to such extreme emotions.

Embrace The Sacraments

Immersing yourself in the Eucharist and taking advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a powerful way to loosen the grip of evil and experience freedom from the baggage of past sins.



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THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not commit adultery."

(EXODUS 20:14)

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not steal."

(EXODUS 20:15)

THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet."

(EXODUS 20:17)



UNDERLYING TRUTH

What does adultery mean for teens and young adults? Well, lust and adultery aren't reserved only for adults. We live in such a sex-stimulated world where the sphere of entertainment rings within our finger tips. The temptations toward lust knocks on our doors every single day. As teenagers, a lot of these emotions are new and hard to understand fully. It can be difficult to control thoughts that bombard our minds each day. If we are not careful, lust and sensual thoughts can lead us to make choices that leave us with crippling consequences.

What is coveting? Jesus teaches us that coveting is not just taking a thing from another. Envy and being angry with someone else's success, progress, gifts and talents also explicitly suggests that we want what others have and are bitter with God and our neighbor that our circumstances are not alike.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Did I deliberately watch pornographic pictures, or movies with explicit sexual content?
- Have I engaged in sexual intercourse?
- Have I engaged in physical intimacy like kissing, fondling etc.?
- Have I indulged in self-abuse like masturbation?
- Have I been an occasion of sin for others by acting or dressing immodestly or talking vulgar?
- Have I advocated that it is okay for young people to be in relationships and cross boundaries as they seem fit?
- Do I engage in cybersex and unclean chats with people I don't know?
- Do I desire a better body in order that I am appreciated or seen by the opposite sex?
- Do I have a specific uncontrolled attraction towards a certain part of a man/woman's body?
- Have I been envious of my sibling and harboured bitterness in my heart?
- Am I envious of someone else's gift?
- Have I been bitter with God and people in authority when I have not been in the fore-front?
- Have I engaged in malicious gossip about those I am envious about?



HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Talk To Someone

If you're struggling with ongoing sexual sin, it's time you sought help. Turning to someone we trust and then resolving to follow their lead to avoid temptation will go a long way to experience the peace we desire.

Know Your Limits

Identify the things that tempt you the most to violate this commandment. Seek a trusted source to help you make some lifestyle changes that will enable you to live above the sin.

Learn Your Gifts

God has provided each of us with spiritual gifts. When we learn about our gifts, we learn that each of our gifts are unique and used by God in the way He wants.



THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

**"You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor."**

(EXODUS 20:16)

UNDERLYING TRUTH

Think about the level of deception that surrounds us. From ads to social media feeds, movies to television, we fall for what we see and look for ways to alleviate our lives even at the cost of truth. Think about the reason for our 'little' lies. We reason after all, if we didn't lie people would get hurt, right?

The Bible spells it simply. Scripture calls Satan a liar. When we embrace a lifestyle of lies and deception we are only feeding into the enemy's traps. But when we walk in the truth, however hard, we follow in the footprints of Jesus who always leads us to freedom and safety.



EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Have I lied – to my parents, teachers, friends, siblings?
- Have I injured another's reputation by lying about them?
- Have I judged others?
- Did I insult or tease others with the intention of hurting them?
- Have I engaged in bullying peers at school, calling them names?
- Have I used false names or fake ID's to get what I wanted?
- Do I hide my true identity from others?
- Do I believe its okay to tell little "white lies" if it doesn't harm anyone?

HOW TO LIVE BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Set Things Right

Come clean with your masked identity. Get off dual ID's and set yourself on the road to reveal the real YOU.

Learn Tact

One of the reasons we lie is to protect our friends. But know that it is God who protects and will protect when we choose to walk in truth.

Know The Truth Hurts Sometimes

Just because you choose to tell the truth doesn't mean it will always be accepted with open arms. Some people may be hurt by what you have to say. It happens. In the end though, most people will appreciate the honesty rather than the lies.

Learn The "Real" Truth

Learn God's Word. It's the only blueprint that works!

