Examination of Conscience for College Students

Check out Fr. Dylan’s homilies: http://fatherdylanjames.blogspot.co.uk

**Pride (ST II-II q162)**

Pride is the mother of all sin (St. Gregory the Great, c.f. St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica II-II q162 a8). It is craving for excellence beyond what is reasonable, an inordinate desire for one’s own superiority (ST II-II q162 a2). Reason requires that a man reach up for what is proportionate to him, and proportionate to his abilities. In pride a man seeks to be more than he should be. It makes a man hate being equal to men, and hate being less than God.

- Have I refused to admit my own weaknesses?
- Have I sought things beyond me?
- Have I dwelt on the failings of others?
- Have I judged others? Ranked myself better than others?

**Judging**: In thought, word, or deed?

- Have I hated others?
- Have I refused to learn from others?
- Have I been stubborn? Refused to admit I was wrong? Refused to accept that another person had a better idea?
- Have I abused my power by imposing my will/preferences/opinions on those in my care, or on friends?
- Have I been insensitive in how I have proclaimed Christ’s truths?
- Have I been arrogant? Have I held others in contempt?
- Have I failed to show respect to those in authority? To my professor, chaplain, parents, etc.
- Have I failed to do my duties to my family/parents?
- E.g. return phone calls, visit, stay in touch? Have I been self-seeking in my time with family at home? Do I consider what I owe?
- Have I spent time with them? Have I manifested my concern for them?
- Have I been indifferent to my study, my work, my prayer?
- Have I been forgiving and tolerant of them? Have I scandalized them?

**Pussilanimity** – the opposite of pride. False-humility fails to use our gifts.

- Have I neglected to use the talents that God has given me?
- Have I avoided difficult situation and difficult people?
- Have I failed to witness to the harder teachings of Christ? In morals?

**Vanity (ST II-II q132)**

Concerns external glory. ‘Glory’ – the good of a person manifested to others. The proper end of glory is: God’s glory, and, our neighbour’s salvation. Concerns external glory. ‘Glory’ (as it fills with plots of revenge), a passion for innovation (so that something ‘new’ makes us look good), an inordinate desire for one’s own superiority (ST II-II q153 a3): Blindness of the mind (the passions cloud thinking), rashness, thoughtlessness, instability, self-love, hatred of God for forbidding lust, love of the pleasures of this world, despair of the future world.

**Lust (ST II-II q153; CCC 2351)**

“Lust is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disorderly when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.” (CCC 2351). It is a sin of excess.

- Have I looked at others impurely? With what frequency? Has this led to impure thoughts? What frequency and duration? Have I viewed other people as mere sexual objects rather than as persons to be loved? Have I flirted/danced impurly/toyed with the feelings of another?
- Have I guarded my heart against affections for which I am not free to date? Have I behaved in a way that might tempt romantic affections from those who are not free to date?

**Impure Thoughts** – Have I entered impure thoughts? Briefly, or at length? What was the cause? On what occasions? (e.g. at night when half-asleep and less culpable, or when fully awake?)

- Impure acts: Alone, with another? Impure touches with boy/girlfriend?
- Impurity in hugs with others?
- Have I flirted/danced impurely/toyed with the feelings of another?
- Have I received Holy Communion while in a state of serious sin?
- Have I neglected to seek Confession before Holy Communion?

**Modesty** – has my dress been an occasion of sin for others?

- Have I dressed so as to help others avoid sin?
- Have I sought to flatten myself by drawing improper attention to certain aspects of my beauty?

**Play** – Have I been guilty of an excess or deficiency in resting myself in ‘play’?

- The soul’s rest is in pleasure (ST II-II q168 a2). I have refused to express mirth at another’s humour? (A man who has no humour is an unreasonable burden to his fellow man. ST II-II q168 a4)

**Impatience**

- Have I been impatient with people, events, sufferings, life?

**Anger/Wrath (ST II-II q158)**

Anger is undue desire for vengeance – undue in cause or in amount. Anger can be just or unjust: punishment can be too much or too little, it can even not be deserved at all, and it can be measured out by someone who does not have the authority to give it. Anger through zeal can be dangerous, and cloud later judgments.

The 6 daughters of wrath: Indignation (we deem the one we are angry with to be justly deserving of punishment), Anger/Wrath (II-II q153 a4): Blindness of the mind (the passions cloud thinking), rashness, thoughtlessness, instability, self-love, hatred of God for forbidding lust, love of the pleasures of this world, despair of the future world.

- Have I dwelt on the failings of others?
- Have I listened to others in anger?
- Have I been stubborn? Refused to admit I was wrong? Refused to accept that another person had a better idea?
- Have I been indifferent to my study, my work, my prayer?
- What frequency and duration? Have I viewed other people as mere sexual objects rather than as persons to be loved? Have I flirted/danced impurly/toyed with the feelings of another?
- Have I been physically violent?
- Have I insulted people? Quarrelled with people? Lost my temper?

**Impatience**

- Have I been impatient with people, events, sufferings, sicknesses?
Covetousness/Avarice (ST II-II q118)

Avarice is the excessive love of possessing things (a1). It is contrary to reason and due measure. Material goods are only useful in helping us towards an end; to desire them in themselves is an evil. ‘The love of money is the root of all evil’ (1 Tim 6:10) – i.e. it is a capital sin.
The 7 daughters of avarice: Hard-heartedness to the poor, insensitivity to mercy, dissatisfaction in thoughts, restlessness in deeds, violence (to acquire things), falsehood (in words, including perjury), fraud (in transactions), treachery (as in the case of Judas).

Have I desired or lived a lifestyle beyond my means? Have I been resentful of my lack of money? Have I trusted that God will provide for me?

Have I cheated, stolen, or failed to pay my bills on time?

Have I borrowed without permission?

Have I been honest in my dealings with others?

Have I used people for my own ends and advantage?

Have I wasted money on unnecessary expenses or gambling?

Have I spent money on the less fortunate and the poor?

Have I given with a cheerful heart?

Have I paid my taxes honestly?

Various other sins against justice:
Have I failed to keep secrets?
Murder, Theft, Cheating, Contempt for others, Backbiting, Tale-bearing, Derision, Cursing, Boasting, Flattery, Quarrelling.

Envy (ST II-II q36)

Envy or Jealousy – is sadness at the happiness or good of another

The 5 Daughters of envy: Hatred (love desires the good of another), Tale-bearing (to lower a man’s reputation), Detraction, Joy at our neighbour’s misfortunes, Grief at our neighbour’s prosperity.

Gossip and Sins of Speech:

Every man has a right to a good name. A man’s good name is his most precious social possession. Without it he cannot function in society: people will not trust him, will not talk to him, will despise him, etc.

Every man thus has a right to a good name and we do not have a right to take this away from someone. Even when we are accurately describing someone’s bad characteristics we are still depriving him of the good name that he has a right to.

Slander – telling an untruth about someone

Calumny – telling an untruth about someone in a legal context

Detraction – telling a truth about someone that lessens his reputation/good name.

Have I envied or been jealous of the abilities, talents, ideas, plans, good-looks, intelligence, clothes, car, possessions, friends, etc. of another person?

Detraction: Have I damaged the reputation of another?

By deeds/looks/words have I caused others to have lower opinion of someone else?

Slander: Have I exaggerated/lie about the faults of others?

Have I repeated accusations that might not be true?

Gossip: Have I led others to gossip?

Have I neglected to change the conversation/avoid conversation with others who are gossiping?

Have I failed to defend the reputation of others?

Thoughts: Have I mentally judged others?

I.e. internal detraction/slander/gossip of the mind.

Have I borne hatred for another?

Have I been guilty of deception?

Do I despise others of different race, class or culture?

Lies: Have I told lies out of envy (to damage another’s reputation), laziness (to avoid work), or vanity (to make myself look good)?

Gluttony (ST II-II q148)

Gluttony is the inordinate desire for food, unregulated by reason, knowingly exceeding need, for the sake of pleasure.

Gluttony tempts us in 5 ways:

To seek food that is too much, too fancy, too expensive, to eat at improper/excessive times, or in hasty manner, or in a manner lacking manners & social consideration.

The 5 daughters of gluttony: Dullness of mind (whereas abstinence sharpens wits), Unseemly joy (the appetites get disordered), Idle talk, scurrilous behaviour (because reason is dulled and bad behaviour follows), Bodily uncleanness.

Have I eaten more than I need? To how serious an extent?

Have I sought food with undue concentration?

Have I eaten with undue haste and lack of consideration of others?

Have I neglected the food needs of others at the table, or of my roommate? (e.g. do I always take the last cookie)

Have I spent undue amounts of money on food?

Have I practiced fasting and self-denial, especially on Fridays and other fast days?

Have I fasted before receiving Holy Communion at Mass?

Is my heart set on pleasure and amusement?

Sloth/Apathy (ST II-II q35)

Sloth is spiritual sorrow in the face of spiritual good, it is an oppressive sorrow that weighs on a man’s mind and makes him want to do nothing (a1). To not take joy in a good is a bad thing! It is laziness in the things of God.

The 6 Daughter of sloth: Despair (by avoiding our ultimate end of God), Faint-heartedness (in the quest for sanctity), Sluggishness about the commandments, Spite (as in indignation–against other men who do seek sanctity), Malice (as a consequence of spite), Wandering after unlawful things (“Those who find no joy in spiritual pleasures have recourse to pleasures of the body”) (a41).

Isidore adds: Idleness, drowsiness, uneasiness of mind, restlessness of body, instability, loquaciousness (talking too much), curiosity.

Have I sought God above all else, or have I put other priorities (e.g. friendships) ahead of him?

Have I got so caught up in the things of this world that I have forgotten God?

Have I risked losing my faith by bad company, bad reading, cowardice, pride?

Have I trusted God, especially in times of difficulty?

Have I kept the Lord’s Day holy?

Have I worked needlessly on Sunday?

Have I needlessly omitted some part of my spiritual plan of life: daily Mass, daily Holy Hour, mental prayer, Rosary, spiritual reading, etc?

Have I received Holy Communion reverently?

Have I made a due preparation before Mass begins?

Have I made an appropriate thanksgiving after Mass?

Have I entertained distractions in prayer, or failed to give God due concentration in prayer, or rushed my Rosary?

(Note: Not giving God the effort he deserves in prayer is not the same thing as involuntarily weakness in mental distractions.)

Have I fallen asleep in prayer due to lack of effort and discipline in getting to sleep on time? Have I gone to sleep on time?

Have I sinned against God by taking his name in vain?

Have I caused scandal to others by using foul language?

Have I given scandal by setting a bad example to others by my sloth?

Has my behaviour or words led others to sin?

Have I set the good example Christ expects?

Laziness:

Have I neglected my duties as student?

Have I been negligent/duppy/half-hearted in my work?

Have I procrastinated (e.g. with facebook, email), avoiding more serious priorities?

Have I wasted time watching useless TV, or in pointless internet surfing?

Have I, due to lack of effort and discipline, lacked the sleep I need to study, or do my other work?

Am I just, hardworking and honest in my work?

Have I sought to help my roommate clean/wash etc?

Have I been attentive to his/her needs?

Have I prayed for others, or only for myself?

Words: Has my conversation been focused on my own pleasure, or on others?

Has my humour been insensitive/offensive to others?

Punctuality: Have I sinned against my neighbour by being late?

Have I wasted other people’s time by being late or unprepared?

Have I sinned against God by being late for Mass?

Drunkenness: Drunkenness impairs our use of reason. Reason is a gift of God, and is thus rejected in drunkenness. Drunkenness lowers us to the level of the animals, it makes us incapable of virtuous acts, incapable of charity to others, it makes us incapable of knowing right from wrong.

Have I drunk alcohol to excess? Repeatedly?

Have I used prudence to plan the quantity of my drinking?

The Ten Commandments:

I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day. Honour your father and your mother. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods.

The 10 commandments: (ST II-II q150)

The 10 Commandments are: 1. You shall have no other gods besides Me. 2. You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day. 4. Honour your father and mother. 5. You shall not kill. 6. You shall not commit adultery. 7. You shall not steal. 8. You shall not bear false witness. 9. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. 10. You shall not covet your neighbour’s goods.