

# Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Recovering Virtues Exercise

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When completing a thorough moral inventory, we should strive for balance, acknowledging both assets and liabilities. Here we review our conduct through the lens of the seven capital vices and their corresponding recovering virtues. Reflect on the questions below and write about your findings.

## Pride and Humility

**Pride:** An overly high opinion of oneself; exaggerated self-esteem; conceit, arrogance, vanity, self-satisfaction.

- Have I been so proud that I've been scorned (disrespected) as a braggart?
- Have I acted prideful, consciously or unconsciously, out of fear?
- Have I used pride to justify my excesses?
- Do I like to feel and act superior to others?

**Humility:** The acknowledgment that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride and provides the basis for turning to God in prayer.

- When do I put the needs of others ahead of my own desires and wishes for myself?
- How do I remain living in truth?
- Have I embraced and shared my frailties and mistakes while avoiding the role of victim?
- Do I actively give God and others credit for my success?

## Greed and Generosity

**Greed:** An excessive desire for acquiring or having more than one needs or deserves.

- Have I been so greedy that I've been or could be labeled a thief?
- Do I long for the possessions of others out of fear of not getting enough?
- Do I let greed masquerade as ambition?

**Generosity:** An expression of mercy that involves giving to another person something of ours as an act of free will, without obligation.

- Do I treat others the way I would like to be treated?
- Have I sacrificed money, my reputation, and/or my desire for security and comfort for the sake of what is right and just?
- Do I share my time, personal space, money, talents, or other resources with others while expecting nothing in return?
- How am I of service to others?

## Envy and Admiration

**Envy:** The active resentment of another's achievement, possessions, or excellence to the extent that we wish to have it for ourselves.

- Do I agonize over the chronic (persistent or recurring) pain of envy?
- Does seeing the ambitions of others materialize make me fear that mine haven't?

- Do I suffer from never being satisfied with what I have?
- Have I spent more time wishing for what others have than working toward those same achievements?

**Admiration:** This virtue entails gratitude for the gifts and blessings that God has given others.

- Do I genuinely show appreciation for things that are true, good, and beautiful?
- How do I express praise for God when impressed by nature's beauty, the goodwill of another, or good fortune that comes my way?
- Rather than falling into envy, have I been inspired to grow in virtue through my appreciation of another's gifts?

## Wrath and Forgiveness

**Wrath:** A strong feeling of anger activated by a real or supposed injury, often shaped into an intense urge to act aggressively or take vengeance upon another; a violent manifestation of harboring resentment.

- Have I been angry enough to do physical injury to another person?
- Do I get angry out of fear when my instinctive demands are threatened?
- Have I enjoyed self-righteous anger in that many people annoy me and that makes me feel superior to them?
- Have I engaged in gossiping as a polite form of murder by character assassination?

**Forgiveness:** "An intentional decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve it" (Archbishop Tutu).

- For whom does my heart break?
- How do I share empathy with others?
- Is there a long-standing grudge that I have let go of or a broken relationship that no longer spurs feelings of resentment?
- When have I let go of an injustice as if it never even happened?

## Lust and Chastity

**Lust:** A "disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure" (CCC 2351).

- Have I been lustful to the point of overstepping another person's sexual boundaries?
- Do I fear I will never have the sex relations I feel I need?
- Do I have sex excursions that have been dressed up in dreams or delusions of romance?
- Do I covet another person's spouse or someone whom I am not in a romantic relationship with?

**Chastity:** The successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of our bodily and spiritual being.

- When have I experienced freedom to love myself and others without sexual attachment?
- How do I respect other people's sexual boundaries?
- What actions do I take to keep from viewing pornographic images and videos?

# Gluttony and Asceticism

**Gluttony:** Excessive indulgence in food, drink, or other substances.

- Have I been gluttonous enough to harm my health?
- Do I grab for everything I can, fearing I'll never have enough?
- Do I bury myself in my work, hobbies, or other activities that I prefer, to the detriment of my responsibilities?

**Asceticism:** The practice of denying physical or psychological gratification in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal.

- In what situations do I practice moderation in my behavior or thoughts?
- Do I voluntarily fast from items or behaviors that bring pleasure and comfort for the sake of a greater good?
- When have I renounced material possessions or detached myself from sensual pleasures?
- In what ways do I choose to delay gratification?

# Sloth/Acedia and Zeal

**Sloth:** Disinclination to action or labor; sluggishness; habitual indolence; laziness, idleness; slowness; delay. In spiritual terms (*acedia*), it can be defined as a "form of depression due to lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, carelessness of heart" (CCC 2733).

- Have I been paralyzed by sloth?
- Do I become alarmed or fearful at the prospect of work?
- Do I work hard with no better motive than to be secure and slothful later on?
- Do I loaf and procrastinate?
- Do I work grudgingly and under half steam?

**Zeal:** Faith and love in action; excitement in pursuit of God's will.

- What am I passionate about that brings joy to others and myself?
- What virtuous activities did I pursue before my addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment settled in?
- What healthy routines and practices does my family engage in that I value?
- How do my actions speak of my love for God?